

ALIENSTM OMNIBUS

VOLUME 1

Billie only wanted what all children want—the warmth and security of family, the human connectedness that comes from belonging. What she *got* was a nightmare without end. Wilks was a space marine with a near-fatal flaw: he had a heart. Thrown together in the last hellish night of an Alien invasion of a far-flung colony outpost, Billie and Wilks fought together to survive. Thirteen years later, Wilks is in prison and Billie lives in a mental institution, the nightmare memories of the massacre at Rim seared into her mind. Now the pair get a chance to be reunited, to return to that outpost where it all happened, to finally end the business between themselves . . . and the Alien monsters that altered their destinies and destroyed their dreams.

Dark Horse Comics took the industry by storm with its release of *Aliens*, a comics series that for the first time captured the power of film source material and expanded its universe in a way that fans applauded worldwide. Now, the core Dark Horse *Aliens* series—*Outbreak*, *Nightmare Asylum*, and *Female War*—are collected in a value-priced, quality-format omnibus, featuring nearly 400 story pages in full color. Written by screen and television scribe Mark Verheiden and illustrated with consummate skill by Mark A. Nelson, Den Beauvais, and Sam Kieth, *Aliens Omnibus Volume 1* is an essential piece of the *Aliens* mythos and a great entry point into the storied Dark Horse *Aliens* library.



darkhorse.com

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ALIENSTM
OMNIBUS

1

DARK
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VOLUME 1



ALIENS™

OMNIBUS



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This volume collects material previously published as the Dark Horse graphic novels *Aliens: Outbreak*; *Aliens: Nightmare Asylum*; and *Aliens: Female War*; and stories from the Dark Horse comic book *Dark Horse Presents: Aliens Platinum Edition*.

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OUTBREAK



NELSON '89

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MARK A. NELSON



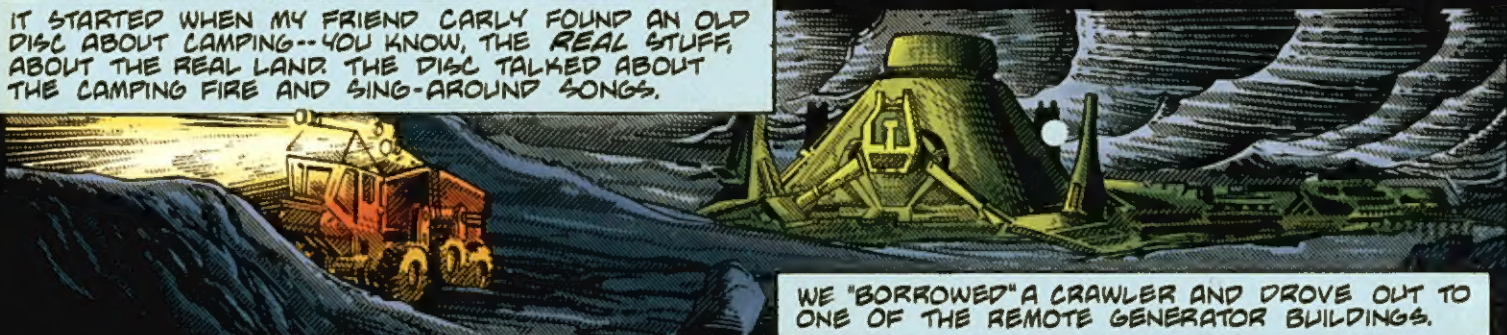


DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT LAST NIGHT?

WHY? IT WON'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE.

GIVE ME A TRY.

IT STARTED WHEN MY FRIEND CARLY FOUND AN OLD DISC ABOUT CAMPING--YOU KNOW, THE REAL STUFF, ABOUT THE REAL LAND. THE DISC TALKED ABOUT THE CAMPING FIRE AND SING-AROUND SONGS.



WE "BORROWED" A CRAWLER AND DROVE OUT TO ONE OF THE REMOTE GENERATOR BUILDINGS.

WE COULDN'T LIGHT A FIRE, BUT WE PLUGGED A CRAWLER HEATER INTO ONE OF THE BATTERY OUTLETS AND GOT CLOSE TO KEEP WARM.

I'M FREEZING! WHO'S IDEA WAS THIS?

YOURS, POWER-DRAIN!

I REMEMBER THINKING HOW MUCH I LIKED BEING THERE, AWAY FROM THE COLONY AND THE MACHINES--JUST ME AND MY FRIENDS.

WHAT ELSE DID THEY DO ON THE DISC, CARLY?

THEY BURNED RATIONS OVER A FIRE, WHICH SEEMED KINDA DUMB. AND SOMETIMES THEY...

SOMETIMES THEY TOLD STORIES. SCARY STORIES.



CARLY WENT FIRST. IT WAS SOMETHING ABOUT VAMPIRES AND WITCHES AND MONSTERS. I KNEW IT WAS STRAIGHT OUT OF THE DISC LIBRARY, BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER. WITH THE WIND AND THE RAIN AND THE HUM OF THE HEATER, IT WAS AS SCARY AS ANY VIDEO.

...AND THEN...HE DRANK... ALL OF HER... BLOOD!!

GOD! I HATE VAMPIRES!

SHHHH!

ABOUT THEN, THE HEATER STOPPED WORKING. MAYBE IT WAS A SHORT. EVERYTHING TURNED COLD AND BLUE AND I STARTED TO SHIVER.

YOUR TURN, BILLIE. WHAT'S THE SCARIEST THING YOU EVER SAW?

NO. I WANT TO GO BACK!

IT WAS YOUR IDEA, BILLIE. DON'T CHICKEN OUT NOW--!

I KNEW IF I DIDN'T TELL THEY'D NEVER GO BACK.

OKAY, OKAY. I KNOW A STORY ABOUT A REAL SCARY WITCH AND--

A WITCH? DON'T BE STUPID!

YOU KNOW SOMETHING SCARIER THAN THAT! TELL US!

PL--PLEASE-- CAN'T WE GO BACK--

TELL IT!

I STARTED TO GET MAD AT THEM, PICKING ON ME LIKE THAT. ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS GO HOME. I DECIDED TO TELL THEM THE SCARIEST STORY I KNEW.

THERE ARE THESE-- THINGS-- THAT LIVE IN SPACE. THEY LIVE TO FEED.. AND TO HATE.

BETTER!

THEY HAVE ACID FOR BLOOD AND SKIN AS HARD AS HULL STEEL. YOU DON'T SEE THEM UNTIL THEY'RE ON TOP OF YOU. AND THEN ALL YOU SEE ARE THE **TEETH**, GLITTERING LIKE SPARKS AS THEY SNAP..

MAYBE THEY'RE FROM ANOTHER WORLD, OR MAYBE THEY JUST EXIST IN THE BLACK HELL OF SPACE, FEEDING ON ANYTHING THEY FIND. IT DOESN'T MATTER.

NOTHING MATTERS BUT THOSE **TEETH**, SNAPPING SHUT ON BONE AND BRAIN TEARING, CUTTING, CRUSHING--

I--I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD--

BUT IT DOESN'T END IN DEATH.

THEY USE WHAT'S LEFT FOR BREEDING, BURROWING INTO THE TISSUE, SPREADING LIKE CANCER, UNTIL THE PARASITE IS **WHOLE**, UNTIL THE HATE CAN BUILD AGAIN AND AGAIN AND--

MAG! WHAT'S WRONG?

SOMETHING--IS--AAA--
AAAAAGGGGH!

OH GOD, NO!

I DON'T FEEL--

**NOT AGAIN!
NOT AGAIN!**

I GUESS THAT'S WHEN YOU FOUND ME IN THE HALL, SCREAMING.

BILLIE!
WAKE UP! YOU'RE DREAMING!

IF YOU'RE FEELING BETTER, I'LL LOOSEN THE STRAPS.

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU WANT. IT WON'T STOP THE DREAMS. NOTHING CAN STOP THE DREAMS.

NOTHING CAN STOP
THE DREAMS.

THEY'RE
ALL AROUND
US, MAN!

THEY'VE GOT DRAKE
AND VASQUEZ PINNED IN THE
GENERATOR STATION, WILKS!

KNOCK
IT OFF!

STICK
TOGETHER
AND WE'LL GET
THROUGH
THIS.

ME AND FROST'LL TAKE THE FRONT.
QUINN-- LAY DOWN SOME KICK-ASS COVER.
THE REST OF YOU EASE AROUND BACK. WE'RE
GONNA OUTFLANK THESE
MOTHERS.

OUTFLANK
THESE MOTHERS.

JASPER!

HONEY, I'M
GOING TO HAVE
THE PRIVATE TAKE
YOU TO THE--

DON'T
LEAVE ME.

IT'S
GOING TO
BE FINE. I'LL
BE BACK.

WE GET OUT
OF THIS, WILKS, AND
I'M BUYING YOU A
DRINK.

WHEN
WE GET OUT
OF THIS YOU'RE
BUYING ME THE
WHOLE DAMN
REFINERY.

OKAY--ON
MY COUNT. ONE--
TWO--

GENERATOR
ROOM

THREE!!

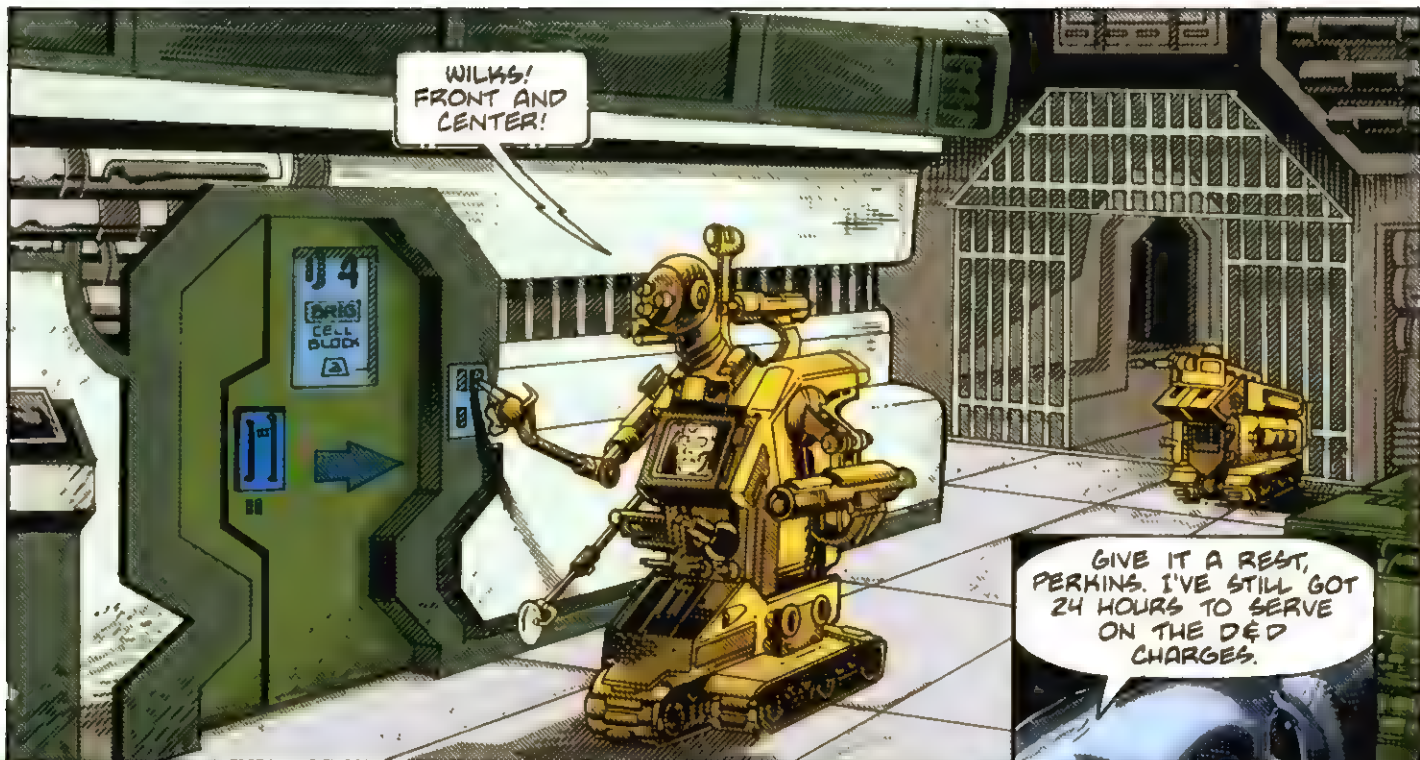
FROST--! VASQUEZ...
DRAKE! THEY'RE BOTH
DEAD! SOMETHING--
INSIDE THEM--

FROST?

ELLIS!
QUINN! GIVE
ME A FIX ON YOUR
POSITION! THERE'S
SOMETHING DAMN
STRANGE
IN--

HELP ME,
WILKS-- DON'T
LEAVE
ME--

NO--
NO--



WILKS!
FRONT AND
CENTER!

GIVE IT A REST,
PERKINS. I'VE STILL GOT
24 HOURS TO SERVE
ON THE D&D
CHARGES.



YOU WISH, PAL. MUCH
AS I'D LIKE TO SLAM YOU
BACK FOR ANOTHER CYCLE,
YOUR HIGH-RANKING
FRIENDS HAVE OTHER
PLANS.

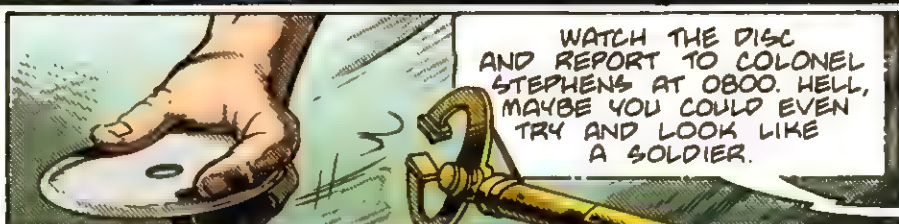
IT'S ABOUT TIME!
I'M NOT SAFE IN HERE
WITH HIM!



I
DON'T HAVE
ANY HIGH-
RANKING
FRIENDS.

HE'S
SICK, MAN--
YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT HE'S GOT
INSIDE
HIM--!

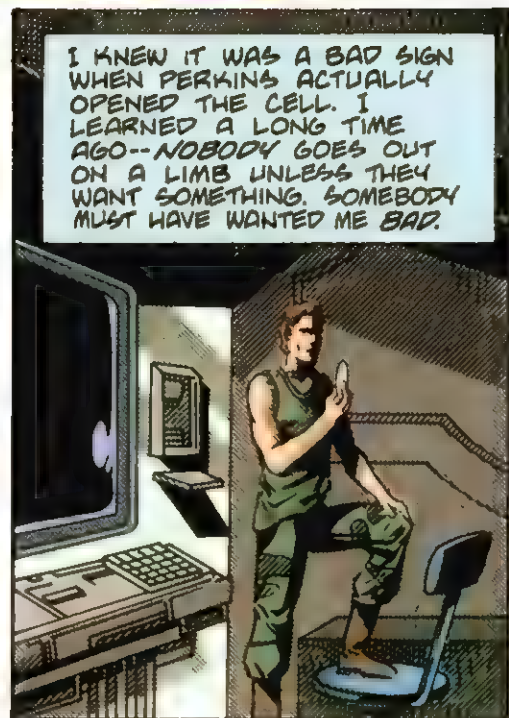
SOUNDS
LIKE YOU
DON'T HAVE
ANY FRIENDS,
PERIOD.



WATCH THE DISC
AND REPORT TO COLONEL
STEPHENS AT 0800. WELL,
MAYBE YOU COULD EVEN
TRY AND LOOK LIKE
A SOLDIER.



I'LL TRY
IF YOU'LL
TRY.



I KNEW IT WAS A BAD SIGN
WHEN PERKINS ACTUALLY
OPENED THE CELL. I
LEARNED A LONG TIME
AGO-- NOBODY GOES OUT
ON A LIMB UNLESS THEY
WANT SOMETHING. SOMEBODY
MUST HAVE WANTED ME BAD.

THEY STILL CALL THEM THE COAST GUARD, EVEN THOUGH THE COAST THEY'RE GUARDING IS THREE OR FOUR HUNDRED MILES OUT IN SPACE.

IT WAS A LOT CHEAPER TO ABANDON A SHIP THAN RETRO-FIT AND REFUEL, ESPECIALLY THE OLD-STYLE NUCLEAR JOBS. A LOT OF THE INDUSTRIALS JUST DUMPED THEM IN DECAYING ORBIT, WAITING FOR GRAVITY AND ATMOSPHERIC BURN-UP TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEM.

THAT WORKED UNTIL ONE OF THE FLAMERS CRASHED HALF-INTACT NEAR A COFFEE PLANTATION ON THE ISLAND OF HAWAII. THE RADIATION KILLED THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION AND MADE IT DAMN NEAR IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND A GOOD CUP OF 'KONA'.

SO NOW THE COAST GUARD TAGS THE FLOATERS AND BLASTS THEM BEFORE THEY CAN DECAY INTO THE ATMOSPHERE. KEEPS THE WORLD SAFE AND GIVES THE GUARD BOYS SOMETHING TO DO BETWEEN POKER GAMES.

PROBE AWAY.

SEE THAT, LYLE? THE DOOR'S BULGING OUT. LIKE SOMEBODY WAS TRYING TO BLOW IT FROM THE INSIDE.

THAT'S CRAZY. THAT'S A DRYDOCK PORT. OPEN THAT IN SPACE AND IT'S BYE-BYE ATMOSPHERE.

YEAH, AND THE PILOT'S POD IS GONE, TOO.

15:32:10

3...2...1...
KAPOW.

GOOD SHOT. TAKE 'ER IN.

15:33:08

OH, JESUS--

STUPID BASTARD WASN'T EVEN WEARING A PRESSURE SUIT--LIKE HE WAS COMMITTING SUICIDE--

HURRY IT UP. THIS THING'S STARTING TO HEAT UP.

15:34:55

IS THAT BLOOD? I THINK THAT'S BLOOD, MAN!

I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE--IT'S LIKE MEGA-CLAUSTROPHOBIA OR SOMETHING--ONE GUY SNAPS AND TAKES THE REST WITH HIM.

15:36:20

FINALLY GOT A READ ON THE VESSEL. STANDARD TYPE FIVE, NUKE ENGINES, OLD STYLE TRANSMITTER--DID A LOT OF DEEP SPACE TIME. TOTAL BUCKET. NO WONDER THEY DITCHED IT--

WAIT A MINUTE. I'M GETTING SOMETHING ON THE MOTION DETECTOR.

15:38:44

LOOK AT THOSE
HOLES. WHAT THE
HELL DOES
THAT?

THREE METERS
AND CLOSING.

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR MYSTERIES. HULL
TEMPERATURE'S UP ANOTHER 50 DEGREES. IT'S
GONNA START FLARING ANY SECOND.

15:40:01

--BACK OFF!
BACK OFF!

IT'S JUST A DAMN
CARGO CARRIER, MAN!

15:40:12

WE MUST HAVE JOLTED
IT WHEN WE BURNED
THE AIRLOCK.

LOOK, THE MANUAL SAYS
CHECK FOR SALVAGE. I DON'T
SEE ANY SALVAGE. OKAY. SO
PLANT THE DAMN NUKES AND
DUST THE DAMN THING.

15:55:06

WAIT A MINUTE-- I'M PICKING
UP SOMETHING ELSE-- RIGHT ON
TOP OF THE PROBE.

THE WHOLE SHIP'S
PROBABLY CRAWLING
WITH AUTOMATES.
C'MON, MOVE IT!

15:59:49

DID WE GET A COMPLETE HISTORY
FROM THE ONBOARD? I THINK COMMAND'S
GOING TO WANT TO SEE SOME HARD
COPY ON THIS TUB.

I PULLED EVERYTHING IN
THE QUEUE. THAT BETTER DO
IT, 'CAUSE AS THEY SAY
DOWN SOUTH--

HASTA LA VISTA!

PROBE
TWENTY METERS
AND CLOSING.

DAMN, THESE
CONTROLS ARE
SLUGGISH.

YEAH?
THAT'S WHY WE
STILL HAVE JOBS.
COMPENSATE, BOY!
COMPENSATE!

TEN
METERS AND
CLOS-- TOO FAST!
SLOW IT DOWN,
FOR CHRIST'S
SAKE!

I'M
TRYING--
SOMETHING'S
INHIBITING
THE LEFT
RETRO!

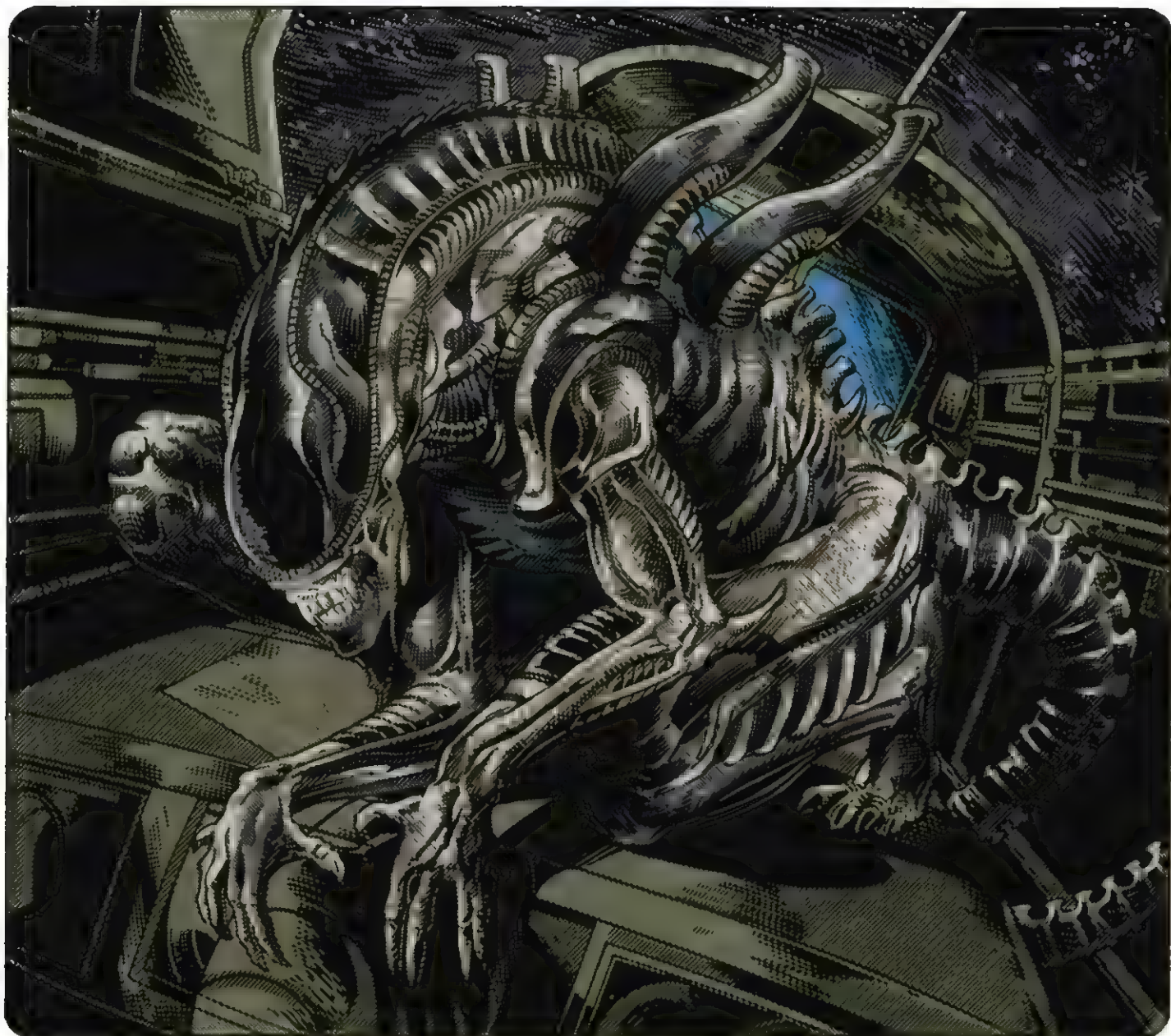
AIRLOCK
DOORS OPEN.

I'M KICKING SOME
TECH ASS IF THEY MESSED WITH
THE RETRO SYS.

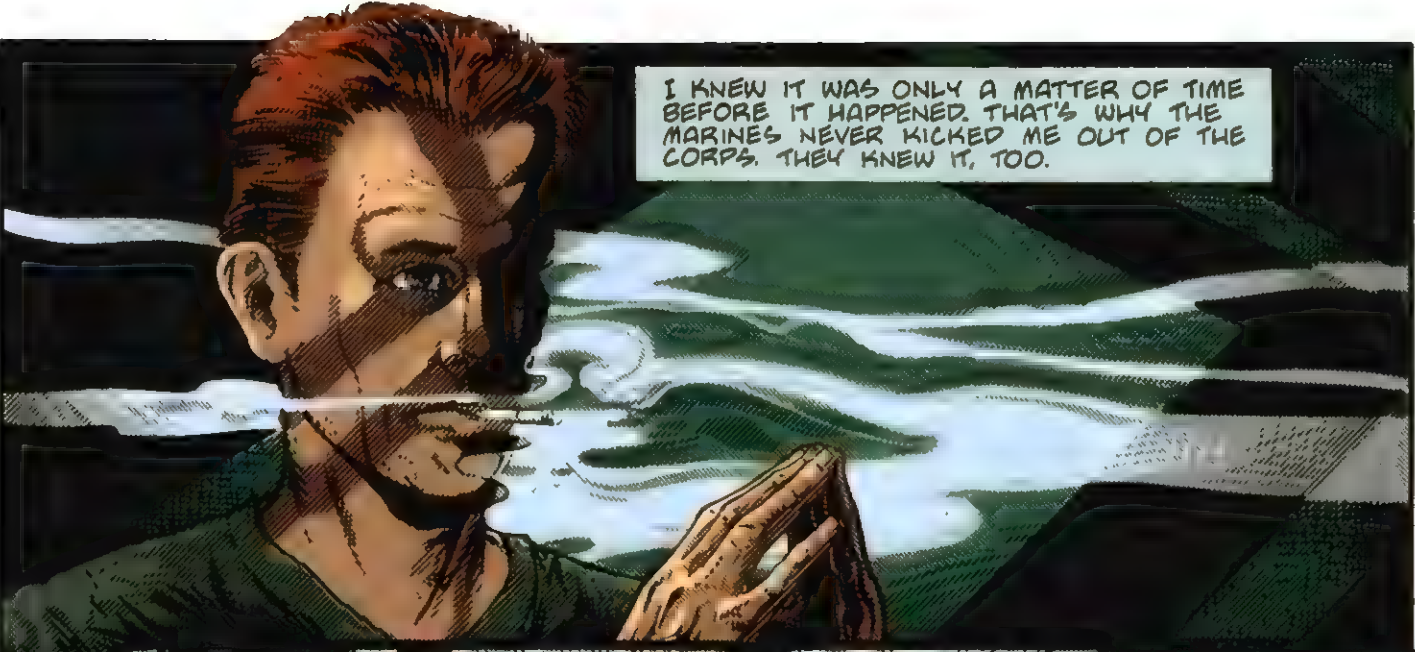
WHAT IN
THE HELL--?

IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE--

16:03:03







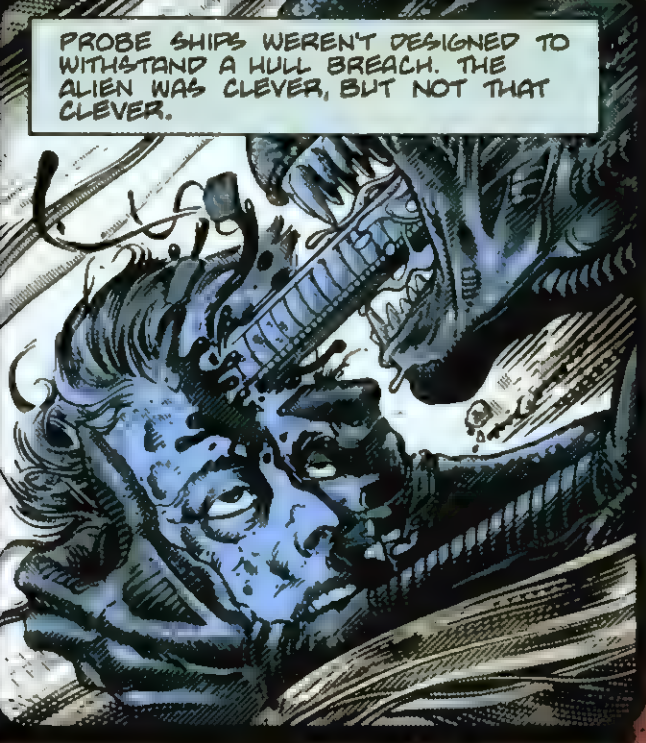
I KNEW IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE IT HAPPENED. THAT'S WHY THE MARINES NEVER KICKED ME OUT OF THE CORPS. THEY KNEW IT, TOO.



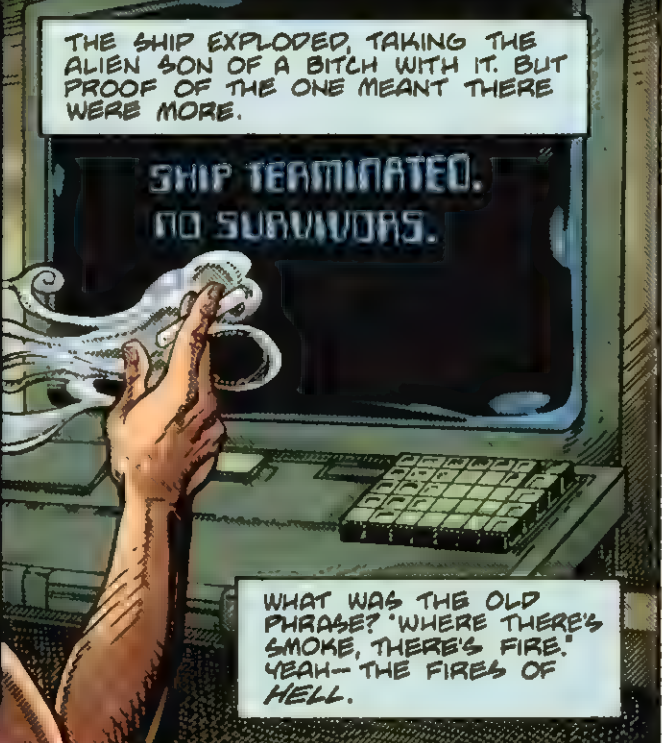
I SAW A GUY TEAR HIS SUIT ONCE. HE HAD TIME FOR ONE SCREAM--THEN HIS BLOOD BEGAN TO BOIL--



ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, THOSE BOYS ON THE COAST GUARD SHIP WERE LUCKY.



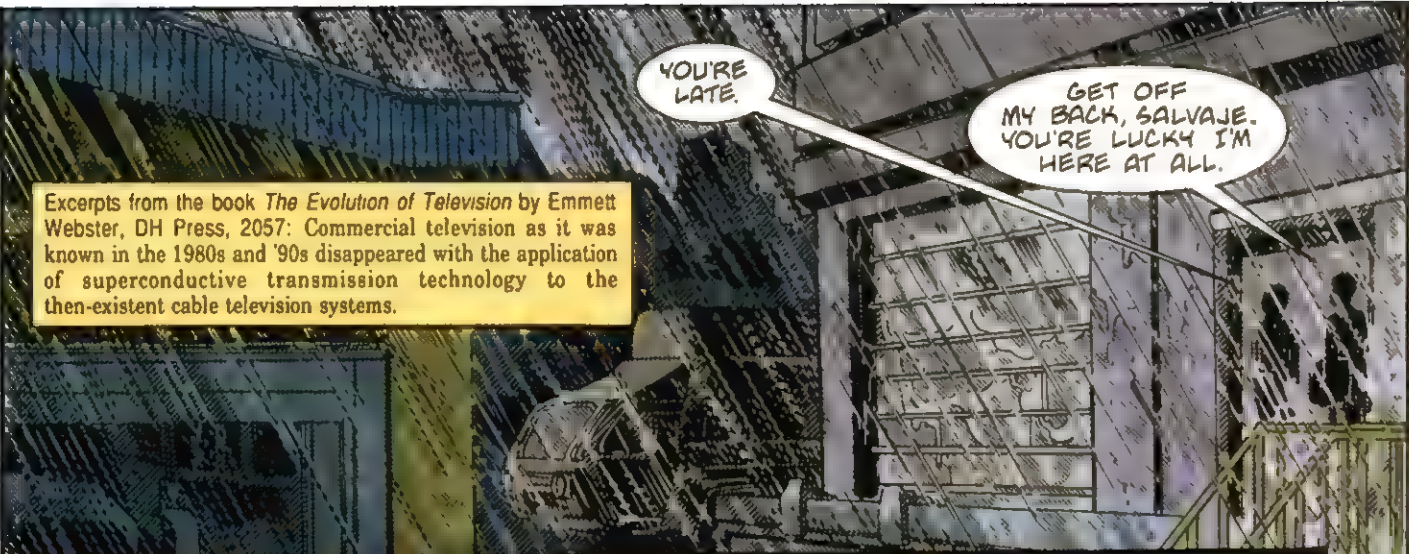
PROBE SHIPS WEREN'T DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND A HULL BREACH. THE ALIEN WAS CLEVER, BUT NOT THAT CLEVER.



THE SHIP EXPLODED, TAKING THE ALIEN SON OF A BITCH WITH IT. BUT PROOF OF THE ONE MEANT THERE WERE MORE.

SHIP TERMINATED.
NO SURVIVORS.

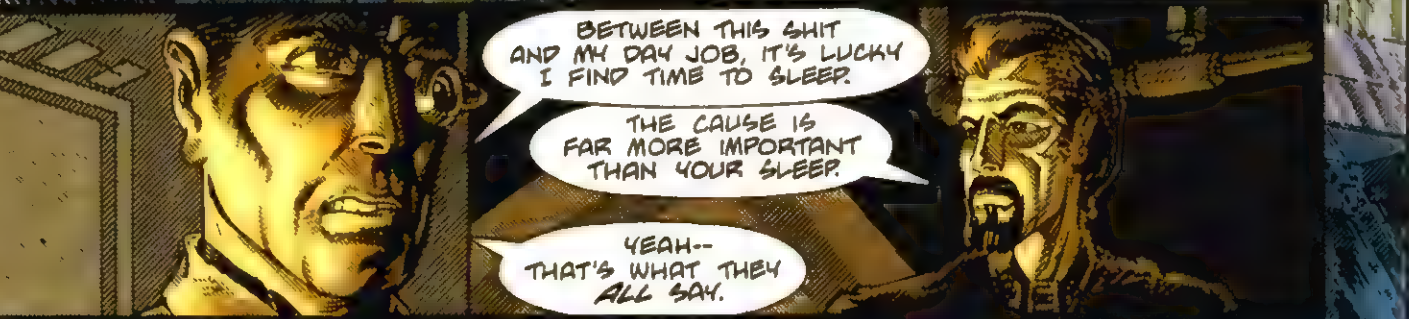
WHAT WAS THE OLD PHRASE? 'WHERE THERE'S SMOKE, THERE'S FIRE.' YEAH--THE FIRES OF HELL.



YOU'RE
LATE.

GET OFF
MY BACK, SALVAJE.
YOU'RE LUCKY I'M
HERE AT ALL.

Excerpts from the book *The Evolution of Television* by Emmett Webster, DH Press, 2057: Commercial television as it was known in the 1980s and '90s disappeared with the application of superconductive transmission technology to the then-existent cable television systems.



BETWEEN THIS SHIT
AND MY DAY JOB, IT'S LUCKY
I FIND TIME TO SLEEP.

THE CAUSE IS
FAR MORE IMPORTANT
THAN YOUR SLEEP.

YEAH--
THAT'S WHAT THEY
ALL SAY.

With systems offering 500, then 1000, and eventually 5000 channels, it became economically infeasible for advertisers to support mainstream dramatic programming. Soon, instead of hundreds of thousands of viewers, audience shares were calculated in the tens.

With the dissolution of the FCC, cable access was open to all persuasions. In a resurgence similar to that seen during the mid-1980s, religious programming became a television staple, outnumbering non-doctrinal programs nearly 100 to 1.



JEEZ--
THIS THING'S
AN ANTIQUE. IT
MUST WEIGH TWO
OR THREE
POUNDS!

BE
CAREFUL.
IT TOOK
MONTHS TO
LOCATE.



I'LL SET IT
ON A MEDIUM SHOT,
YOU AND THE BACKDROP.
PRETTY DULL STUFF COMPARED
TO THE SOUND MESSAGE AND
SUBLIMINALS YOUR COMPETITION'S
BEEN USING--



THE
TRUTH OF
MY MESSAGE
WILL SHINE LIKE
A BEACON. THE
OTHERS ARE
PRETENDERS--

I
PREACH
THE
GOSPEL
OF--



--THE TRUE MESSIAH--!



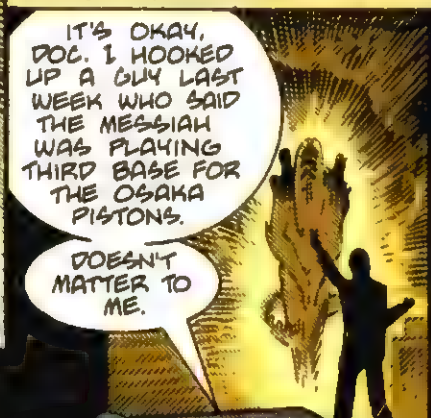
IT'S YOUR MONEY. GET READY--I SHOULD HAVE YOU ON IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES.

With so many programs to choose from, viewer perceptions changed. Much as the fast-cut visual styles of the '90s were defined by 5, then 2 second commercials, the style of mid-century programming was changed with the introduction of the retinal switch, or "eye-box."



I KNOW THERE ARE OTHERS WITH THE VISION. OTHERS WHO HAVE HEARD THE CALL THESE PAST FEW MONTHS.

The "eye-box" was designed to detect minute changes in the capillaries of the retina, initiating random channel changes based on involuntary blood pressure fluctuations. To hold audiences, programmers were forced to devise new styles of programming that would not "trip" the eye-box switcher.



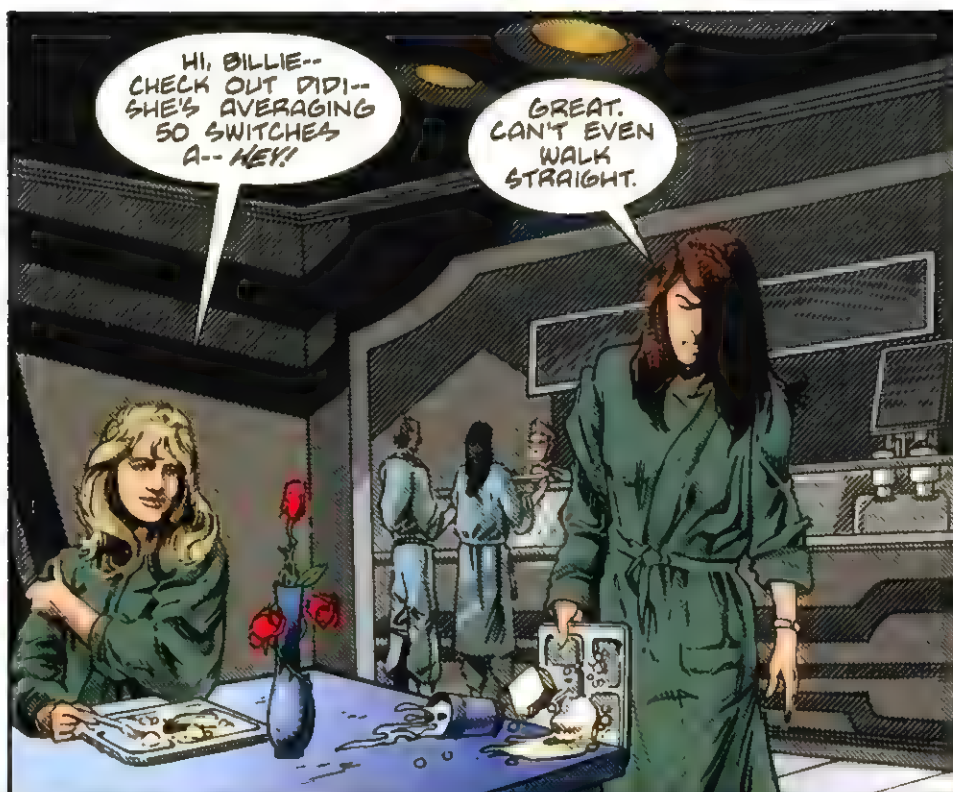
IT'S OKAY, DOC. I HOOKED UP A GUY LAST WEEK WHO SAID THE MESSIAH WAS PLAYING THIRD BASE FOR THE OSAKA PISTONS.

DOESN'T MATTER TO ME.



...GIMME THAT OLD TIME RELIGION.

BUT IF THAT THING'S GOD..



HI, BILLIE--
CHECK OUT DIDI--
SHE'S AVERAGING
50 SWITCHES
A-- HEY!

GREAT.
CAN'T EVEN
WALK
STRAIGHT.



I
WANT
YOU--



--TO
JOIN
OUR--

3215



DOCTOR
HILL'S GOT
YOU BLUED
AGAIN, DOESN'T
HE?

THAT'S THE
TREATMENT
ISN'T IT?



--COMPASSION AND
LOVE AND--

958

YOU HAVE TO BE
STRONG, BILLIE. IN A COUPLE OF
MONTHS YOU'LL GET YOUR
HEARING AND--

I'LL
NEVER MAKE
IT. EVERYTHING'S
SLIPPING AWAY--
MEMORY CONTROL--
CAN'T EVEN
WALK--

BAD DREAMS?
SEDATIVES. CAN'T EAT?
SEDATIVES. TALK OUT OF
TURN? SEDATIVES.



1492

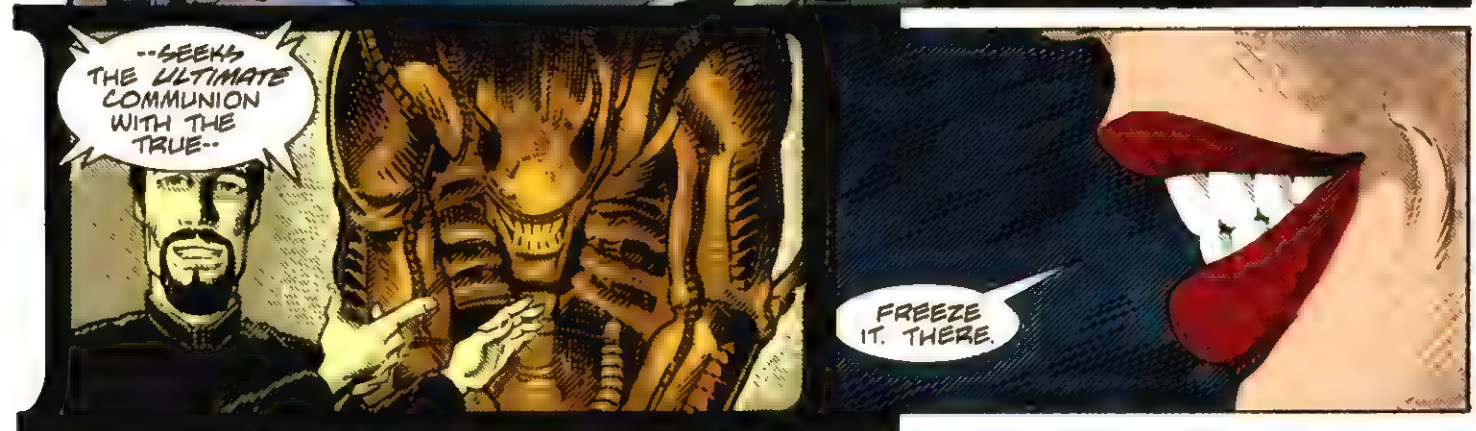
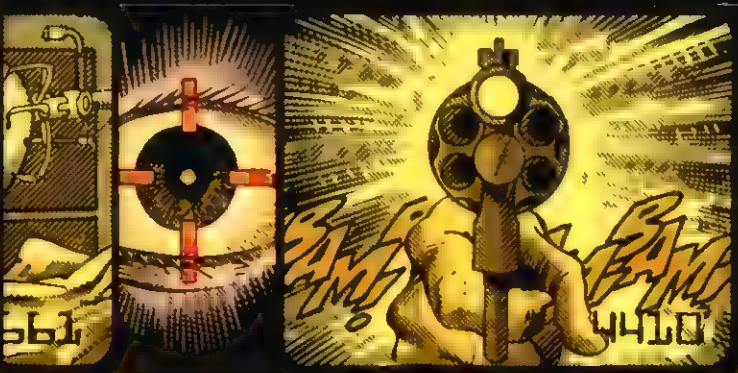


--GET YOUR
ATTENTION--



--FOR THE
NEW WORLD
OF--





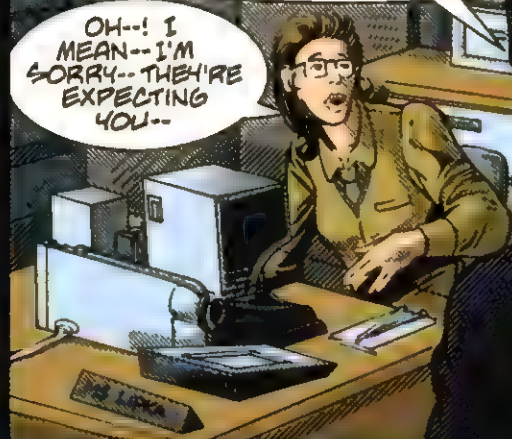


WHAT WAS THAT OLD SLOGAN? "THE MARINES WANT A FEW GOOD MEN." I REALLY BELIEVED THAT KIND OF SHIT WHEN I SIGNED ON. THAT WAS BEFORE AIM. BEFORE I CAME HOME.

I HADN'T BEEN OFF BASE IN YEARS. IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO REMEMBER WHY.

LANCE CORPORAL WILKS TO SEE COLONEL STEPHENS.

OH--! I MEAN--I'M SORRY--THEY'RE EXPECTING YOU--



I'D HEARD ABOUT STEPHENS-- SPECIAL PROJECTS MAN. HE HAD ZIP COMBAT EXPERIENCE, BUT FANCED HIMSELF A REAL WARRIOR. EASY TO DO IN PEACETIME.

CORPORAL WILKS? I--I'M GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT DOWN. AT EASE.



HE KEPT HIS HANDS BEHIND HIS BACK. AFRAID TO TOUCH ME.

I TAKE IT YOU'VE SEEN THE DISC ON THE DUTTON.

YESSIR.

THEN YOU KNOW--

I UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE SOME--EXPERIENCE-- IN THESE MATTERS.

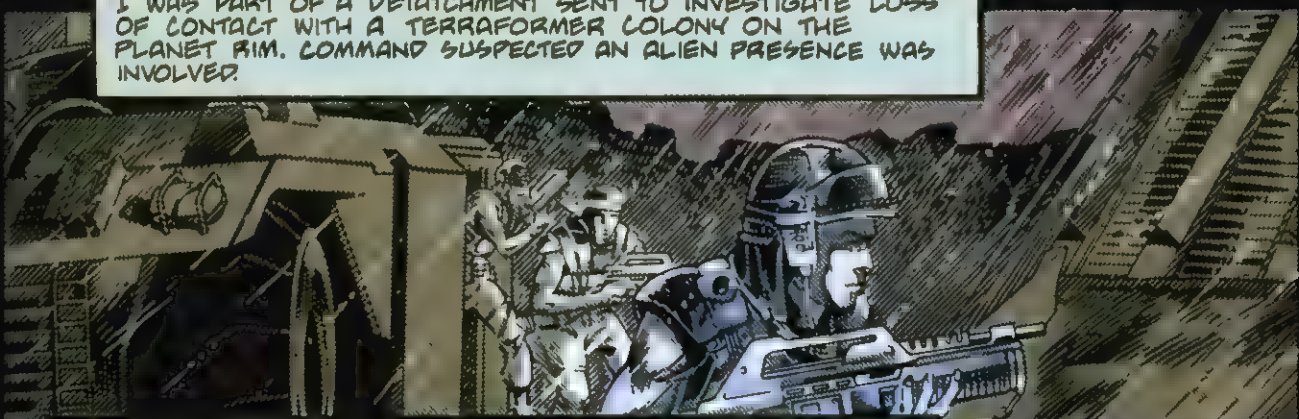
DOCTOR, PLEASE--LET ME HANDLE THE--

WELL? IS IT TRUE?

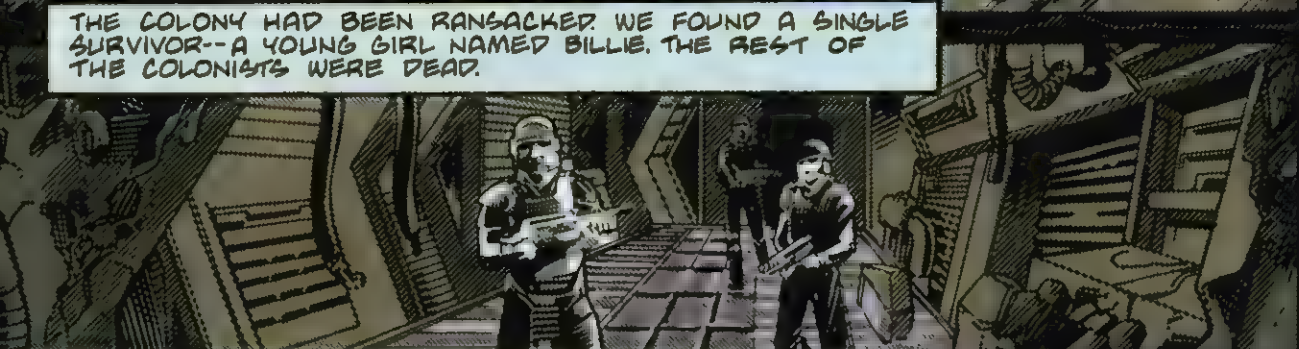


YESSIR. YOU COULD SAY THAT.





I WAS PART OF A DETACHMENT SENT TO INVESTIGATE LOSS OF CONTACT WITH A TERRAFORMER COLONY ON THE PLANET RIM. COMMAND SUSPECTED AN ALIEN PRESENCE WAS INVOLVED.



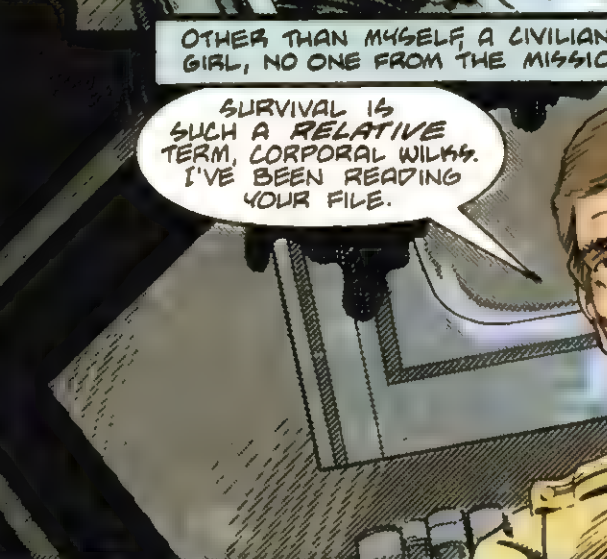
THE COLONY HAD BEEN RANSACKED. WE FOUND A SINGLE SURVIVOR--A YOUNG GIRL NAMED BILLIE. THE REST OF THE COLONISTS WERE DEAD.



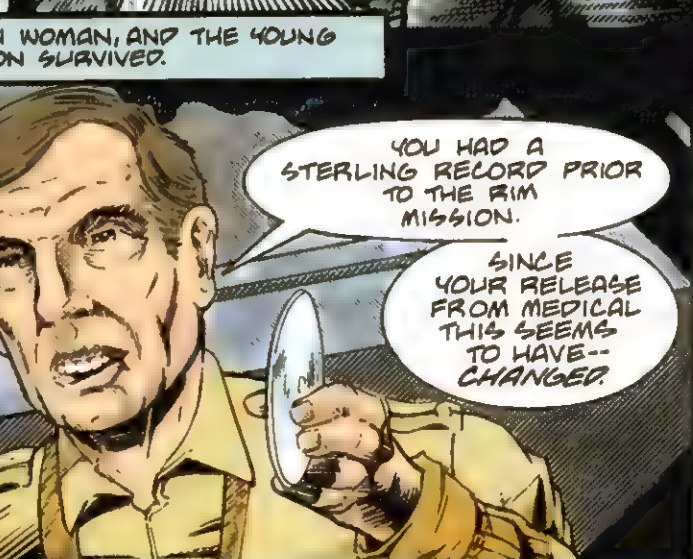
BEFORE THE SQUAD COULD EFFECT DUST-OFF, WE WERE FORCED TO ENGAGE THE ALIEN ENEMY IN CLOSE QUARTERS.



OTHER THAN MYSELF, A CIVILIAN WOMAN, AND THE YOUNG GIRL, NO ONE FROM THE MISSION SURVIVED.



SURVIVAL IS SUCH A RELATIVE TERM, CORPORAL WILKS. I'VE BEEN READING YOUR FILE.



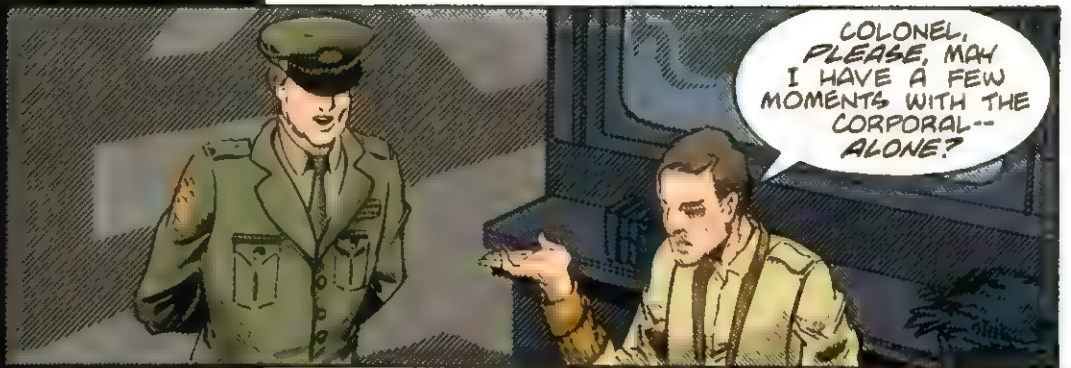
YOU HAD A STERLING RECORD PRIOR TO THE RIM MISSION.

SINCE YOUR RELEASE FROM MEDICAL THIS SEEMS TO HAVE--CHANGED.

SIR, I WASN'T AWARE THAT MY RECORD WAS THE SUBJECT OF THIS DISCUSSION.



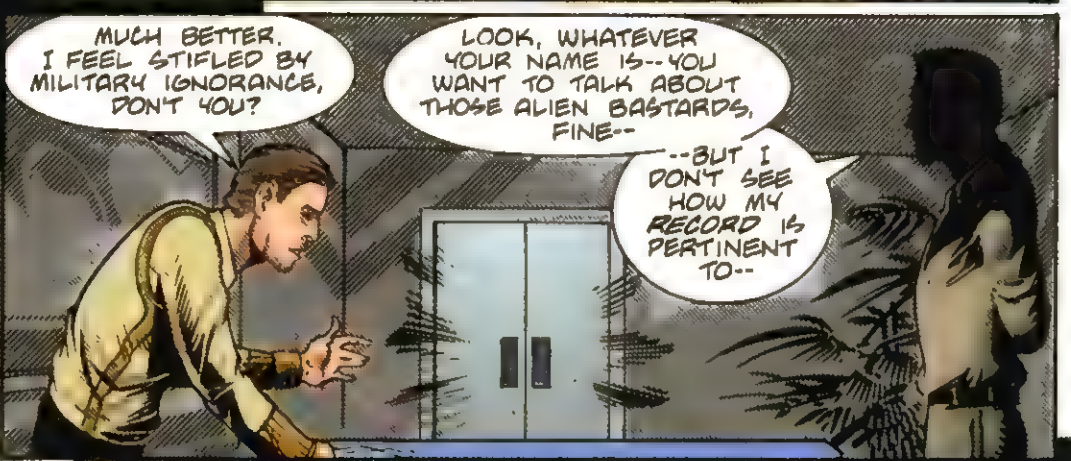
COLONEL, PLEASE, MAY I HAVE A FEW MOMENTS WITH THE CORPORAL-- ALONE?



MUCH BETTER. I FEEL STIFLED BY MILITARY IGNORANCE, DON'T YOU?

LOOK, WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS--YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT THOSE ALIEN BASTARDS, FINE--

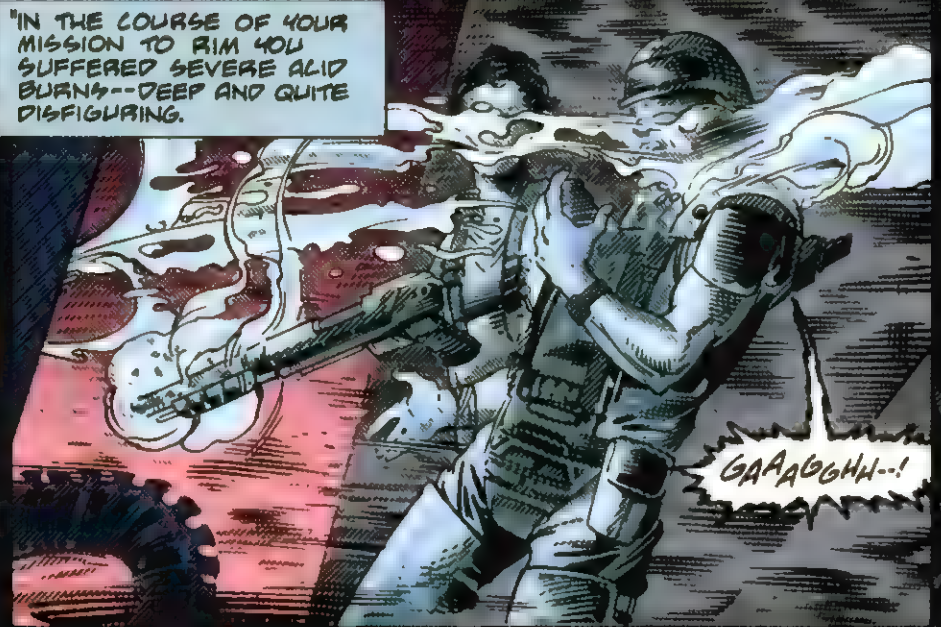
--BUT I DON'T SEE HOW MY RECORD IS PERTINENT TO--



MY NAME IS ORONA--AND IT'S ENTIRELY PERTINENT. PERHAPS A REVIEW IS IN ORDER.

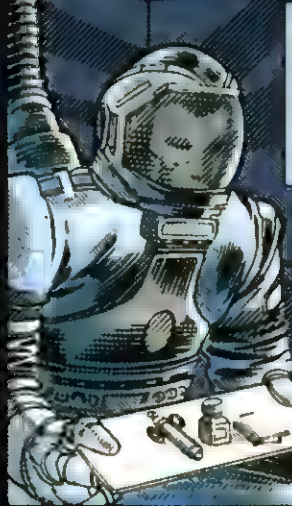


"IN THE COURSE OF YOUR MISSION TO RIM YOU SUFFERED SEVERE ALID BURNS--DEEP AND QUITE DISFIGURING.



GAAAGGH--!

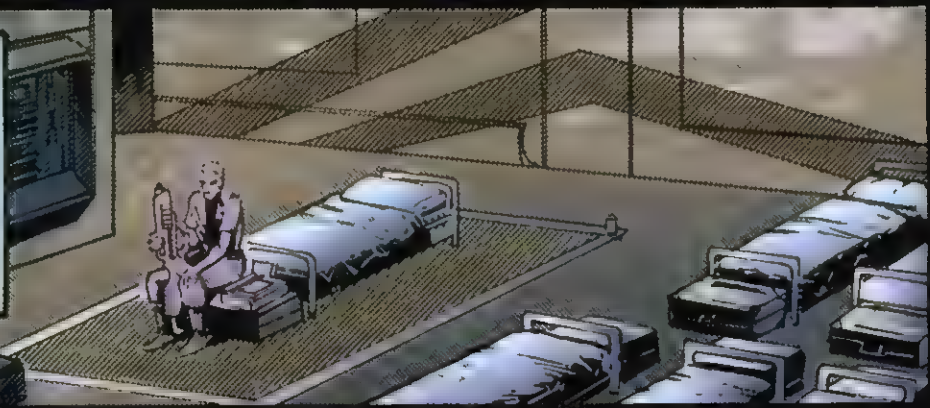
"ONCE BACK ON EARTH, YOU SPENT SEVERAL MONTHS IN QUARANTINE WAITING TO BE CLEARED INTO THE GENERAL POPULACE. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE CONCERN OVER THE.. INFECTIOUS NATURE OF THE ALIEN SPORE.



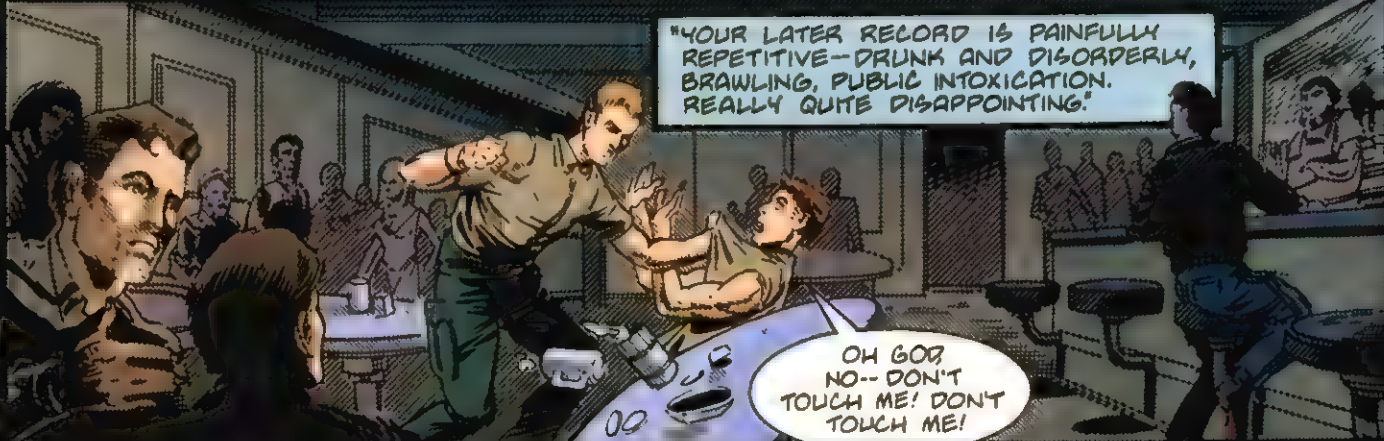
"ACCORDING TO HOSPITAL REPORTS, YOU DIDN'T HAVE A SINGLE VISITOR DURING THIS ENTIRE PERIOD.



"WHEN YOU WERE FINALLY REINSTATED TO ACTIVE DUTY, THERE SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PROBLEMS IN-- READJUSTING-- TO MILITARY LIFE. FORMER COMRADES, FEARFUL YOU MIGHT SOMEHOW BE 'INFECTIOUS' FROM THE ALIEN BLOOD, AVOIDED CONTACT."



"YOUR LATER RECORD IS PAINFULLY REPETITIVE-- DRUNK AND DISORDERLY, BRAWLING, PUBLIC INTOXICATION. REALLY QUITE DISAPPOINTING."



OH GOD NO-- DON'T TOUCH ME! DON'T TOUCH ME!

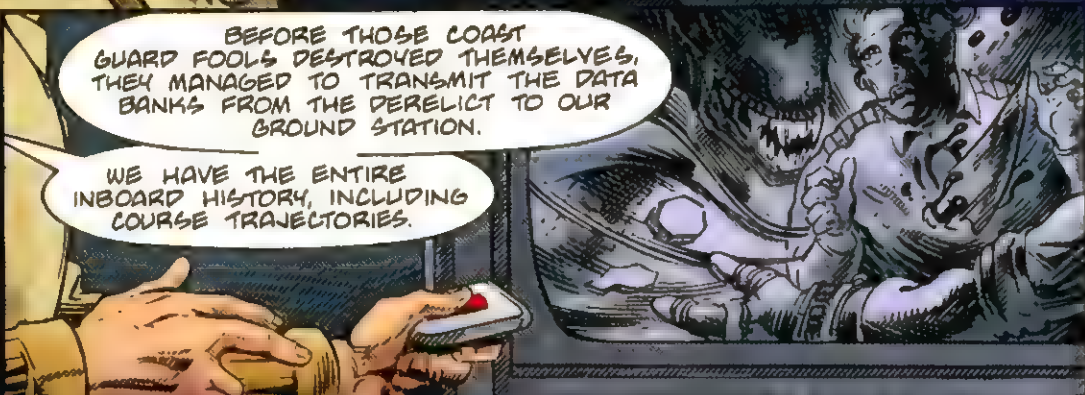
I'M A GENETICIST, CORPORAL, BUT IT DOESN'T REQUIRE A PSYCHOLOGIST TO SEE A PATTERN IN THIS SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR.



ALL OF IT STEMMING FROM THE RIM MISSION.

BEFORE THOSE COAST GUARD FOOLS DESTROYED THEMSELVES, THEY MANAGED TO TRANSMIT THE DATA BANKS FROM THE DERELICT TO OUR GROUND STATION.

WE HAVE THE ENTIRE INBOARD HISTORY, INCLUDING COURSE TRAJECTORIES.



WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

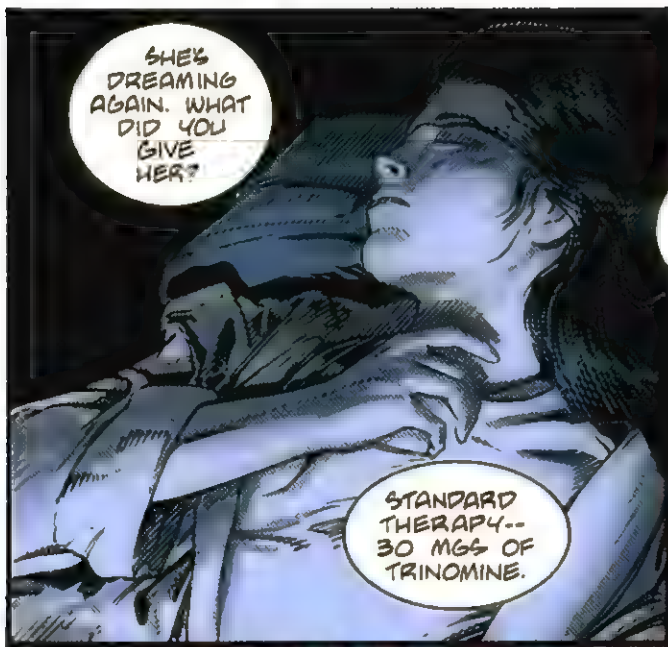


CLICK

YOU SEEK REDEMPTION. I SEEK--

SPECIMENS.





SHE'S
DREAMING
AGAIN. WHAT
DID YOU
GIVE
HER?

STANDARD
THERAPY--
30 MGS OF
TRINOMINE.

IT
DOESN'T
MAKE SENSE.
THE DREAMS
ARE GETTING
WORSE.

WE
MAY HAVE
TO UP THE
DOSAGE.



IS THAT
WISE? MUCH
HIGHER AND YOU
RUN THE RISK
OF PERMANENT
BRAIN
DAMAGE.

IT'S
A TRADE-
OFF, ISN'T
IT?



WHA--?

BILLIE!
WAKE UP! YOU
HAVE A
VISITOR.

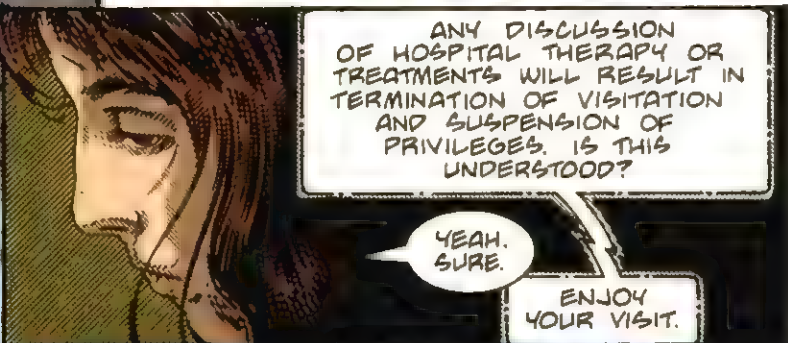


I'LL BE OKAY. THANKS, SASH.

ROOM 4. LOOK, BILLIE, DO YOU WANT ME TO COME IN WITH--



YOU HAVE TEN MINUTES. YOU ARE BEING MONITORED.



ANY DISCUSSION OF HOSPITAL THERAPY OR TREATMENTS WILL RESULT IN TERMINATION OF VISITATION AND SUSPENSION OF PRIVILEGES. IS THIS UNDERSTOOD?

YEAH. SURE.

ENJOY YOUR VISIT.

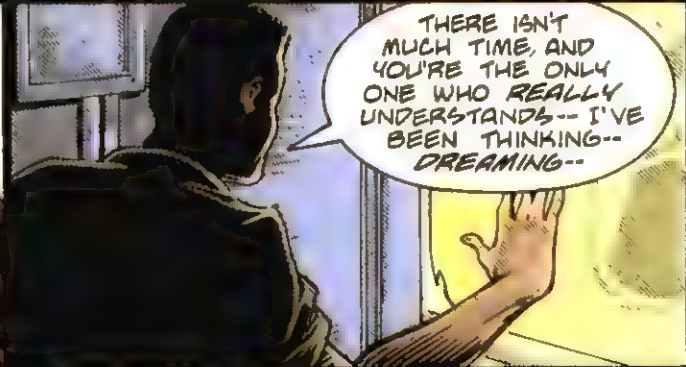


BILLIE--

...I HAD TO SEE YOU.



WILKS--?



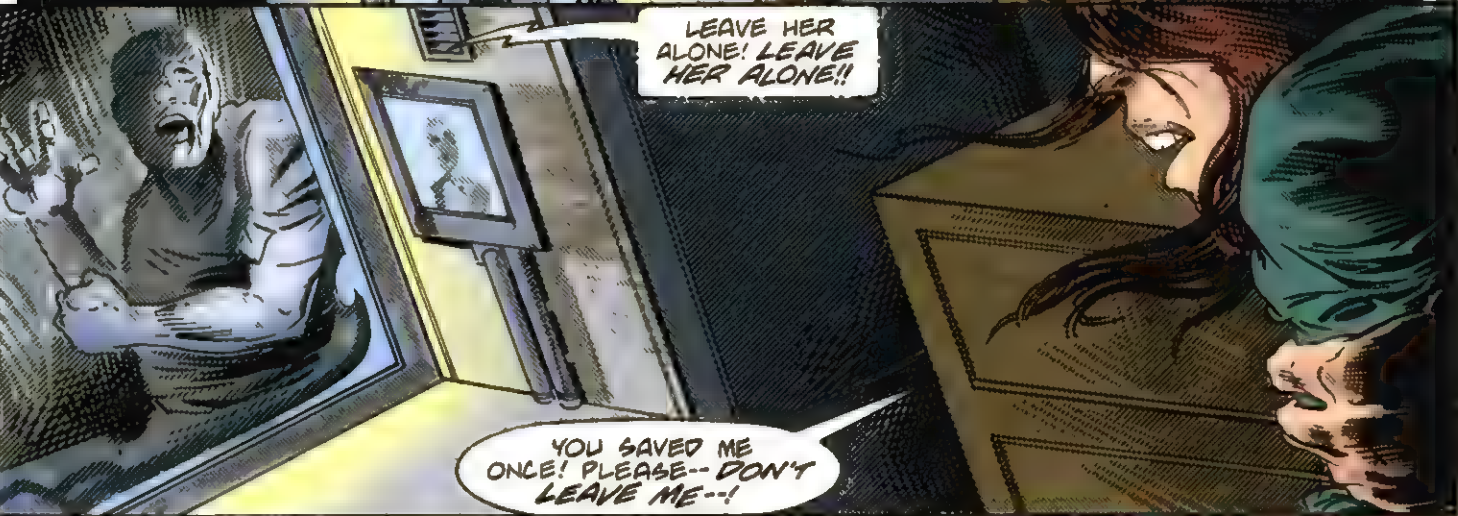
THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME, AND YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO REALLY UNDERSTANDS-- I'VE BEEN THINKING-- DREAMING--



YOUR FACE-- THE ALIENS--



THEY FOUND THE HOMEWORLD. I'M GOING OUT, BILLIE. I'M GOING BACK.



I'M BLIND!

YOU'RE
MY CAPTAIN,
BRAVE LITTLE
CAPTAIN...

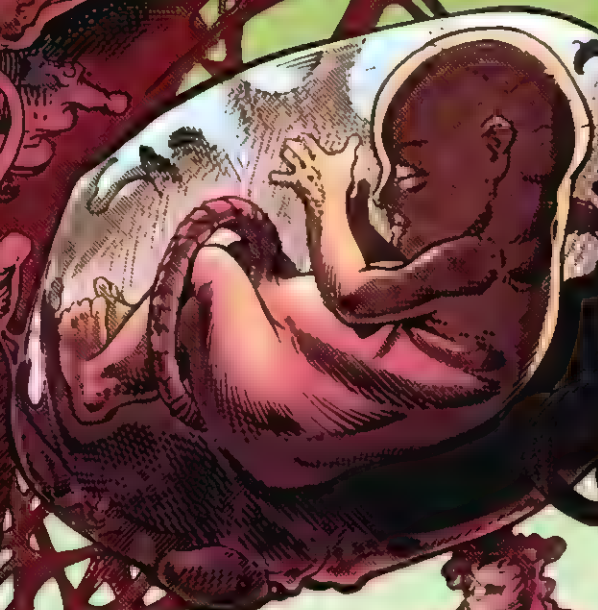
FLY, FLY
AWAY, MY BRAVE
LITTLE CAPTAIN--

SO SCARED--!
PAIN-- CAN'T
SEE--!

I...I REMEMBER THAT SONG.
MY MOTHER USED TO SING
IT WHEN I WAS SMALL--

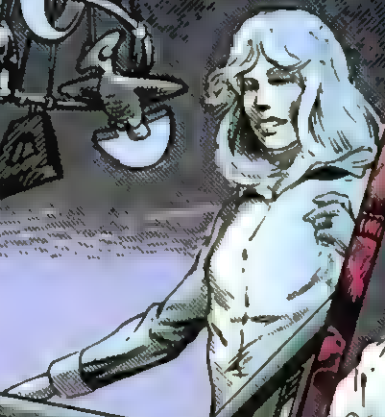
PAIN'S GOING AWAY.
GOD. I FEEL--
WARM NOW.

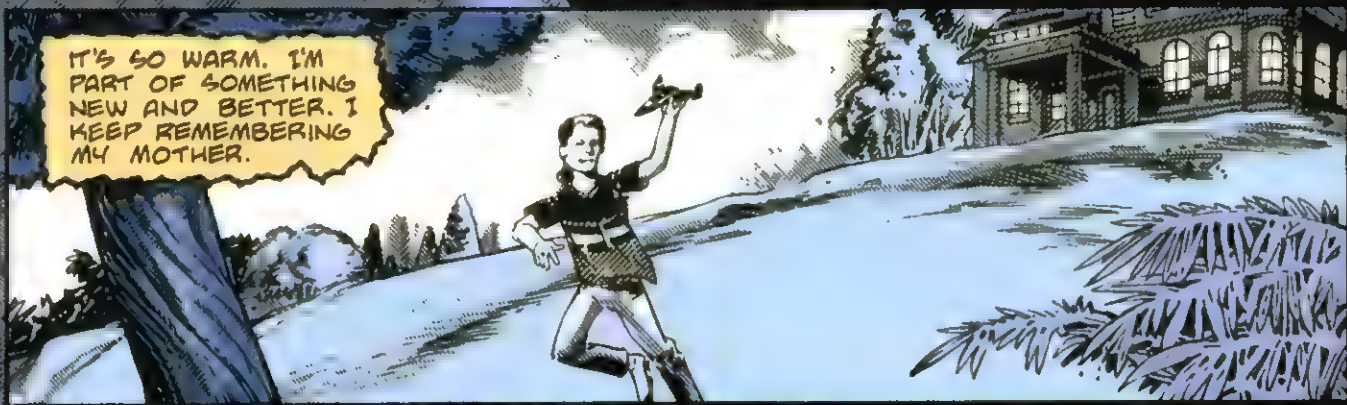
GET IT OFF--
JESUS-- JESUS--
CAN'T BREA--



I'M NOT SCARED
ANYMORE. I DON'T
HAVE TO BE.

SHE'S GOING TO TAKE
CARE OF ME.





IT'S SO WARM. I'M PART OF SOMETHING NEW AND BETTER. I KEEP REMEMBERING MY MOTHER.

YOU SPEND YOUR LIFE TRYING TO FORGET THE WARMTH OF THE WOMB. BUT THE WORLD'S SO EMPTY, SO COLD--

I SEE IT SO CLEARLY NOW. I WAS HUNGERING FOR THE WARMTH AGAIN, FOR THAT ALMOST PRETERNATURAL TOGETHERNESS.



WE PRETEND WITH OUR BODIES, BUT IT ISN'T THE SAME. IT CAN'T BE THE SAME.

CAREER, JOB, HONOR, COUNTRY-- ALL FARLE. WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

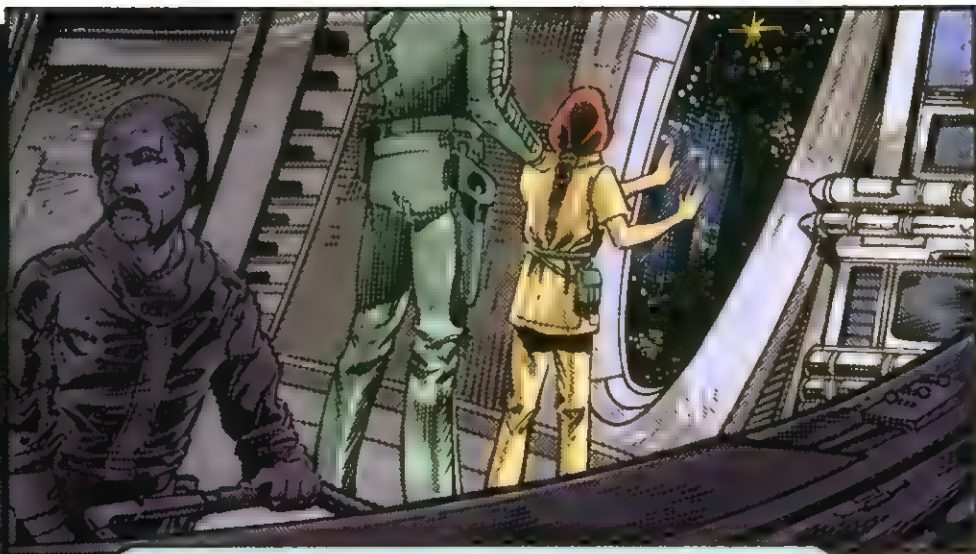


REALITY IS THE VAST LONELINESS OF OUR SOLITARY, COLD EXISTENCE.

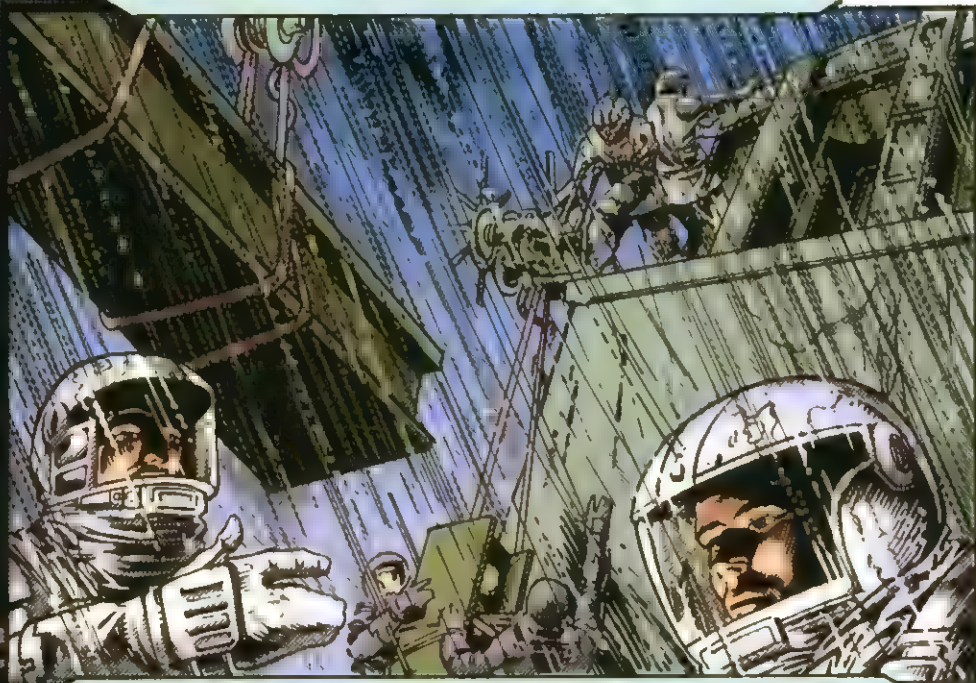
Junket
TRGO EXPRESS

I'M BLIND-- BUT I FINALLY SEE.

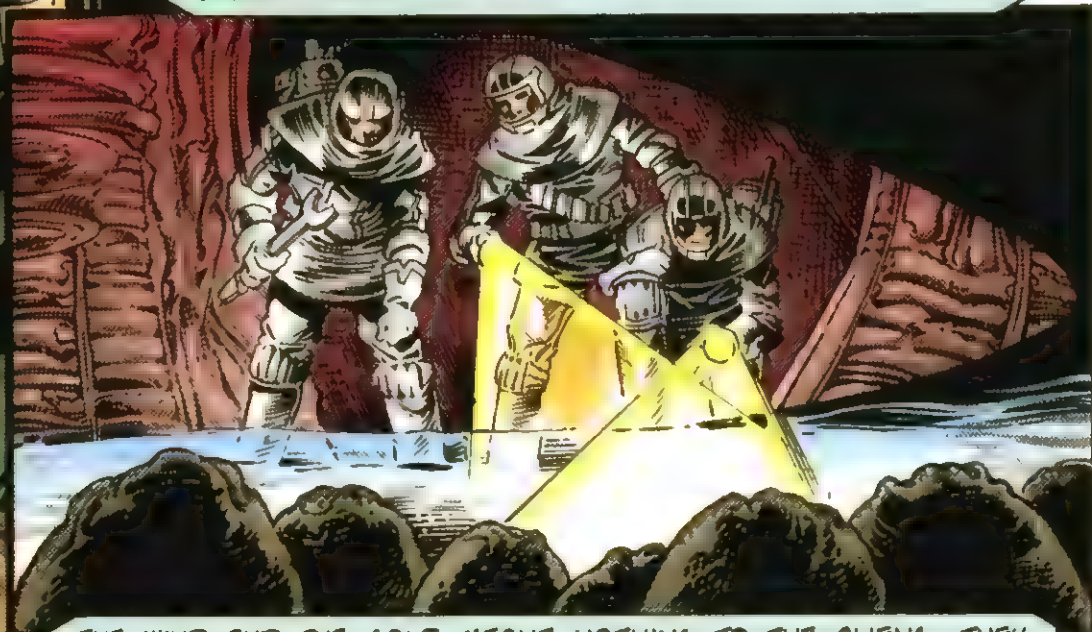
I'M STARING AT THE CEILING. TRANKED AGAIN--THORADIN. I THINK. THE ONE THAT MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE SUFFOCATING.



I RELIVE THE PAST AGAIN AND AGAIN. I WAS BORN ON A TERRAFORMER TRANSPORT IN DEEP SPACE. MY PARENTS NAMED ME BILLIE.

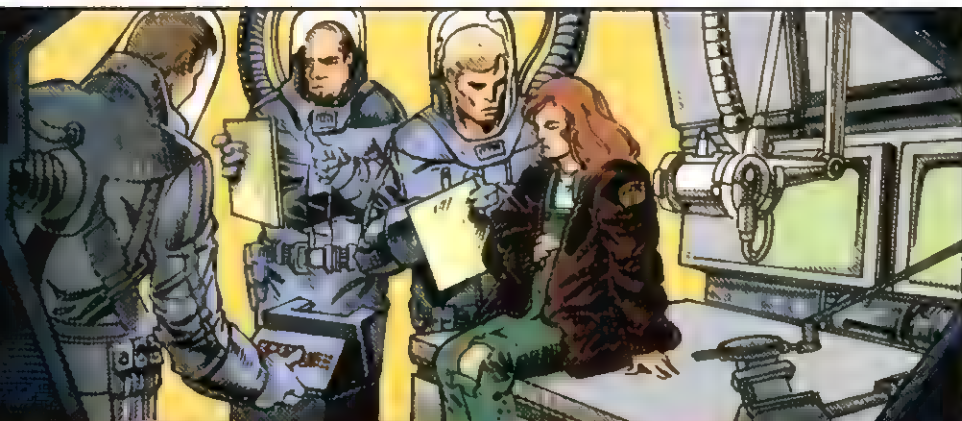


OUR NEW HOME WAS A DESOLATE ROCK CHRISTENED RIM. MY PARENTS HAD VOLUNTEERED FOR THE MISSION IN THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT OF THE OLD EARTH PIONEERS, BUT THERE WAS LITTLE ROMANCE ON THAT CRAEL WORLD.



THE WIND AND THE COLD MEANT NOTHING TO THE ALIENS. THEY WAITED, DORMANT, UNTIL THE TIME WAS RIGHT. I WAS THE ONLY SURVIVOR.

I WAS FOUND BY A MARINE RESCUE TEAM AND RETURNED TO EARTH. THE DOCTORS LOST INTEREST IN ME WHEN I DIDN'T RESPOND TO THEIR TREATMENTS.



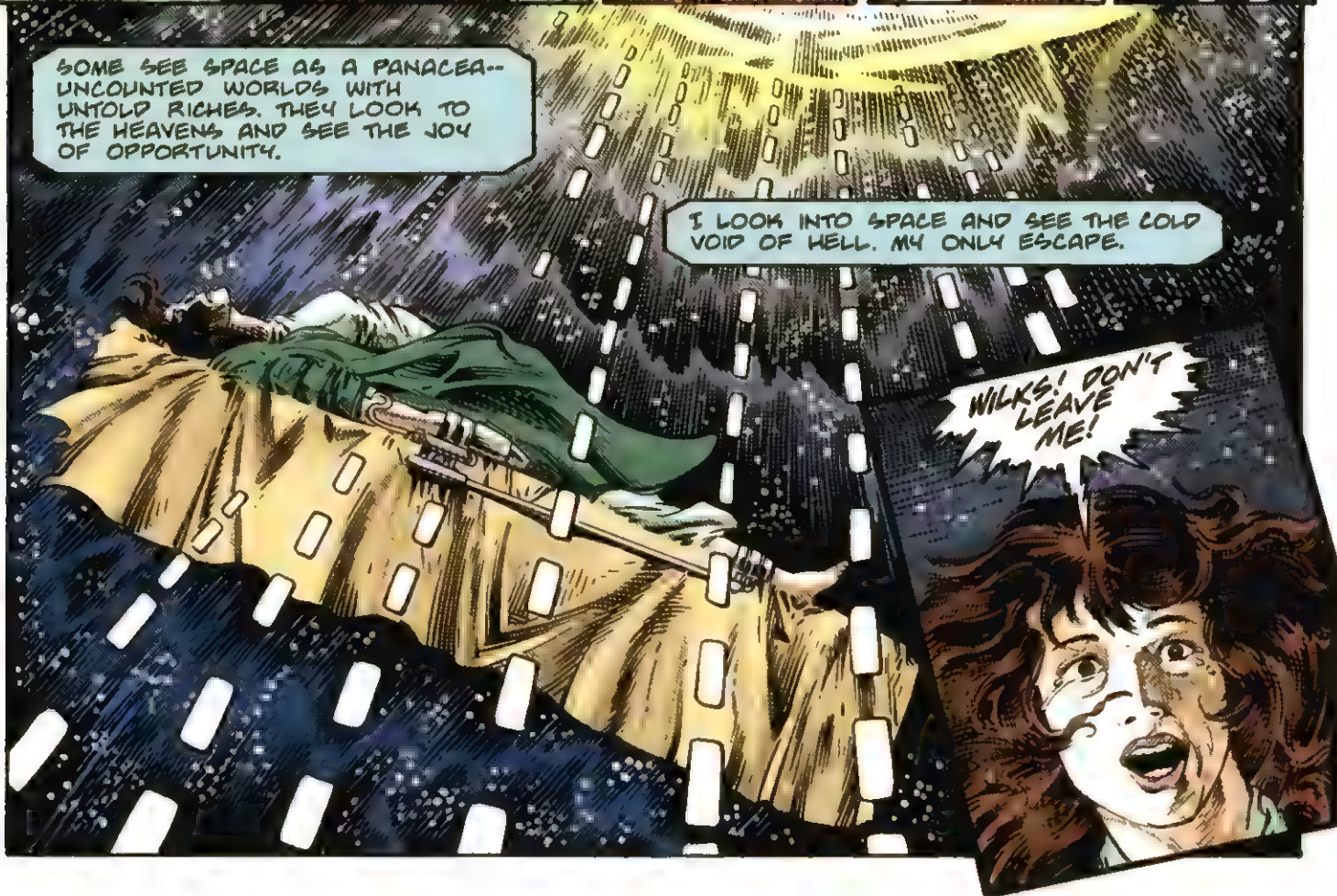
I'M STARING AT THE CEILING. THERE'S A CIRCULAR LIGHT IN THE CENTER, HUMMING SOFTLY.



CRACKS SPREAD ACROSS THE PLASTER, LIKE WRINKLES ON AN OLD MAN'S FACE-- NO. LIKE THE WRINKLES ON MY FACE.

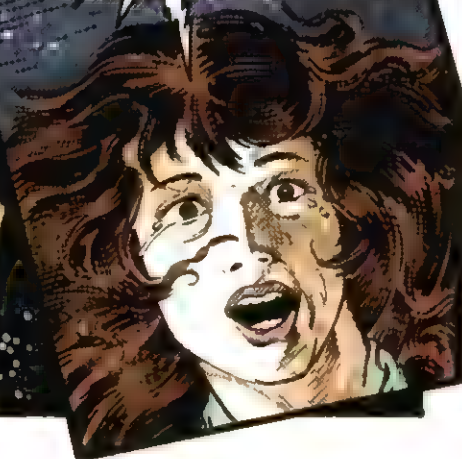


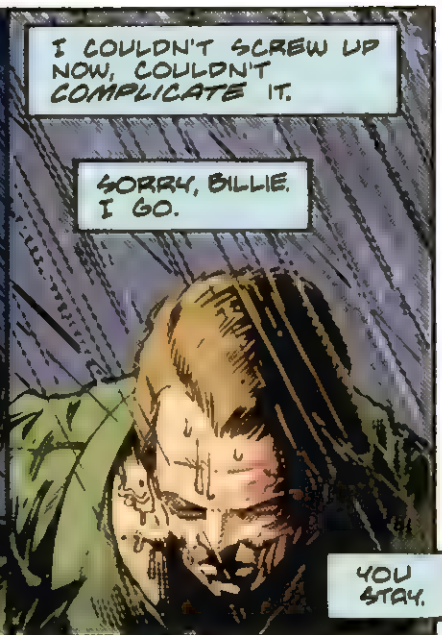
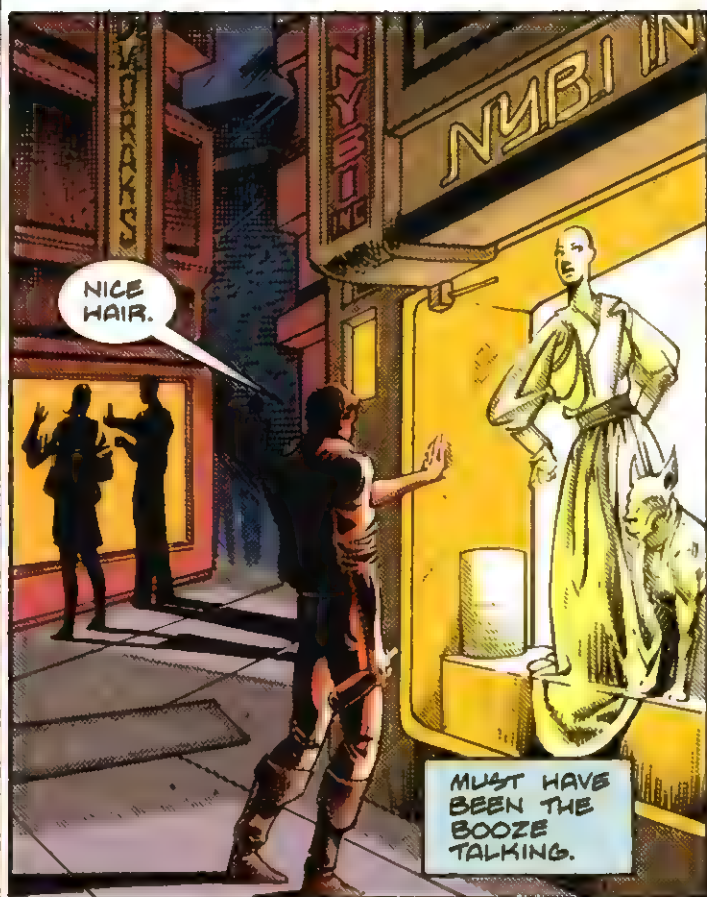
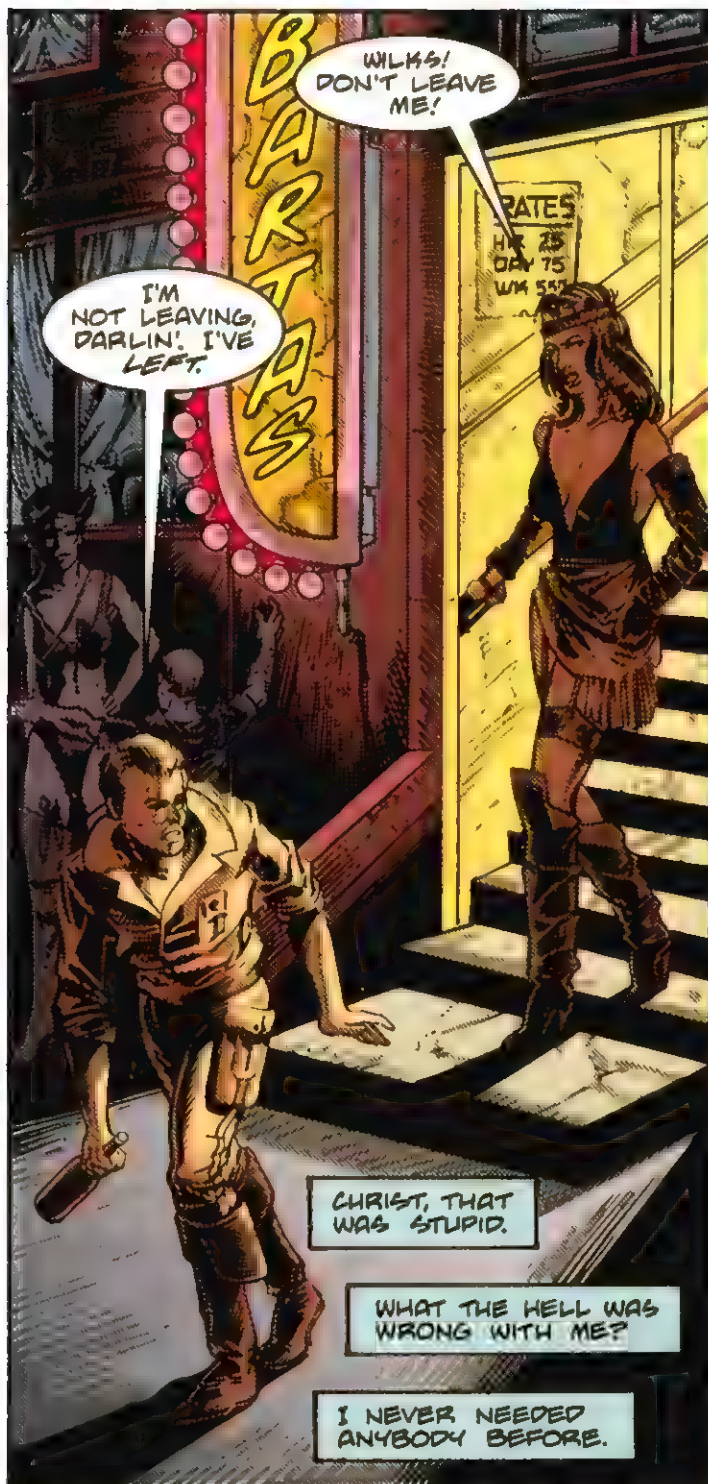
SOME SEE SPACE AS A PANACEA-- UNCOUNTED WORLDS WITH UNTOLD RICHES. THEY LOOK TO THE HEAVENS AND SEE THE JOY OF OPPORTUNITY.

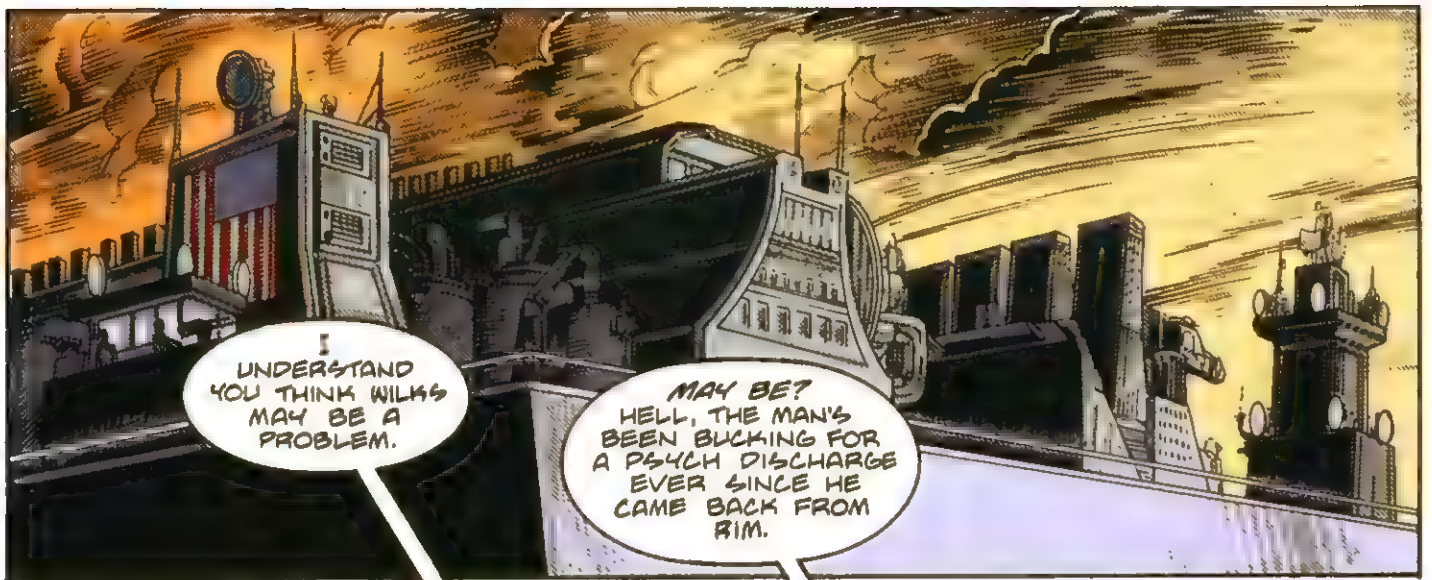


I LOOK INTO SPACE AND SEE THE COLD VOID OF HELL. MY ONLY ESCAPE.

WILKS! DON'T LEAVE ME!







I UNDERSTAND YOU THINK WILKS MAY BE A PROBLEM.

MAY BE? HELL, THE MAN'S BEEN BUCKING FOR A PSYCH DISCHARGE EVER SINCE HE CAME BACK FROM RIM.



LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM, STEPHENS. COMMAND'S SOLD ON THE GUY.

YEAH--THEY THINK HE'S THE BIG TOUGH MONSTER KILLER.

CREW KILLER IS MORE LIKE IT.



IT'S NOT LIKE THE RIM MISSION WAS A SUCCESS. HELL, THE ONLY SURVIVORS WERE A KID, A CIVILIAN WOMAN, AND WILKS.

THE KID'S A BRAIN CASE AND THE WOMAN--WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT BECAME OF HER.

WHICH MEANS WILKS IS THE ONLY EXPERIENCED HAND AVAILABLE.

COMMAND'S MOVED HIM IN WITH THE GRUNTS, AND HE'S SUPERVISING LOADING OPERATIONS.



I DON'T NEED HIS KIND OF EXPERIENCE. C'MON, BILL, YOU'VE STILL GOT SOME PULL OVER AT--

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS, STEPHENS? YOU DON'T LIKE WILKS? CROSS HIM OFF YOUR PARTY LIST. BUT HE'S GOT THE EXPERIENCE AND HE'S GOT THE MISSION. UNDERSTOOD?



YESSIR. UNDERSTOOD.



SOLDIER!
WHAT ARE THOSE
CRATES?

PLASMA
RIFLES, SIR!
THIRTY-FIVE CHARGERS
AND TWENTY-FIVE
THOUSAND PACKS, PER
CORPORAL WILKS'
REQUEST--

HAVE
CORPORAL
WILKS MEET ME
IN THE SKY
OFFICE.
NOW!



JUST WHO IN
THE HELL AUTHORIZED
PLASMA WEAPONS,
CORPORAL?

I
WAS TOLD
TO PREPARE
THE SHIP--
SIR.

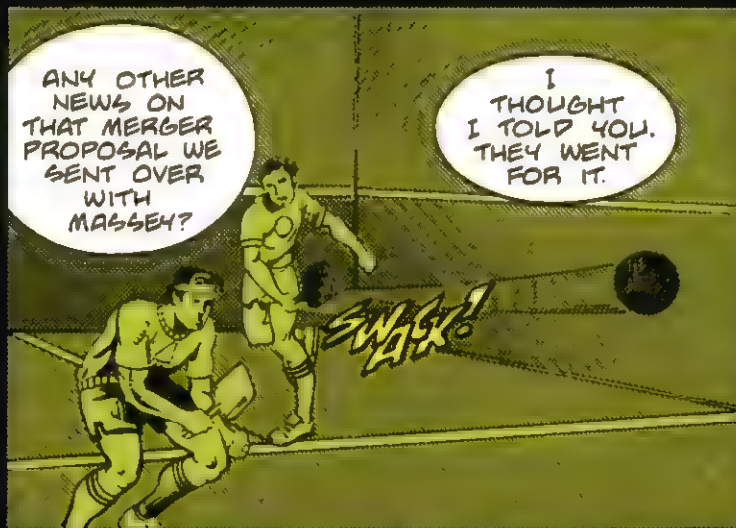
BLASTERS ARE NOTORIOUSLY
UNSTABLE AND GROSSLY DESTRUCTIVE.
WE'RE COLLECTING SPECIMENS,
NOT PIECES.

PERHAPS YOUR
PREVIOUS--EXPERIENCE--
HAS DISTORTED YOUR
JUDGEMENT.

FIRST TIME YOU
FACE OFF WITH ONE OF THOSE
THINGS, YOU'LL WISH YOU HAD
SOMETHING STRONGER.

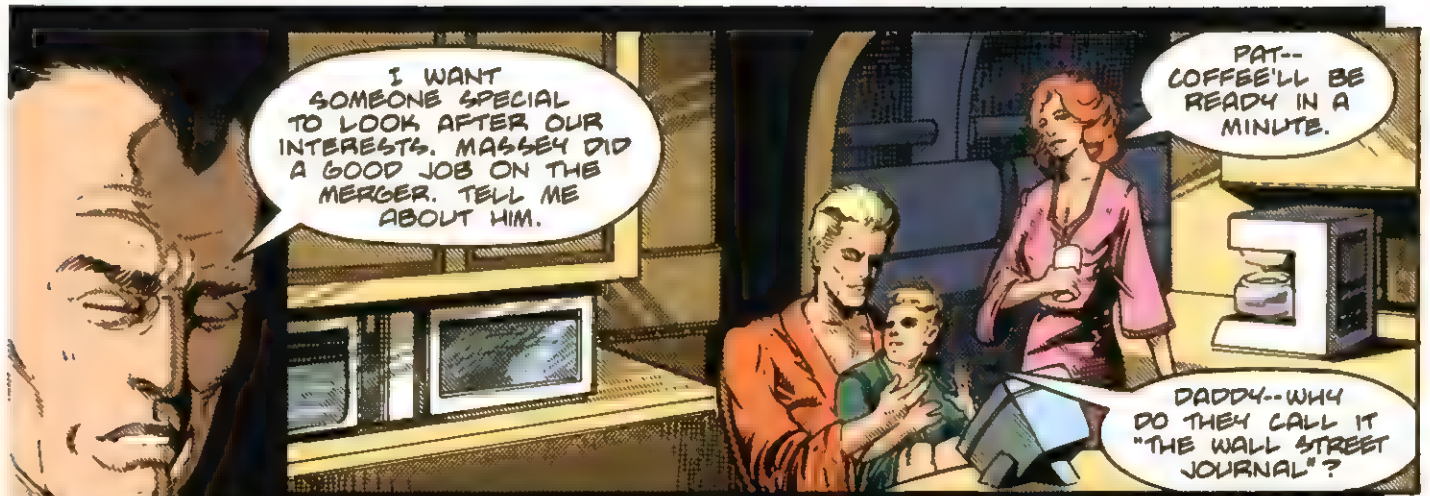
MAYBE COMMAND'S
IMPRESSED WITH YOU,
BUT I'M NOT. I WON'T
JEOPARDIZE THE MISSION
OR THE SHIP WITH
THOSE BLASTERS.

TAKE
THEM OFF



I
THOUGHT
I TOLD YOU.
THEY WENT
FOR IT.

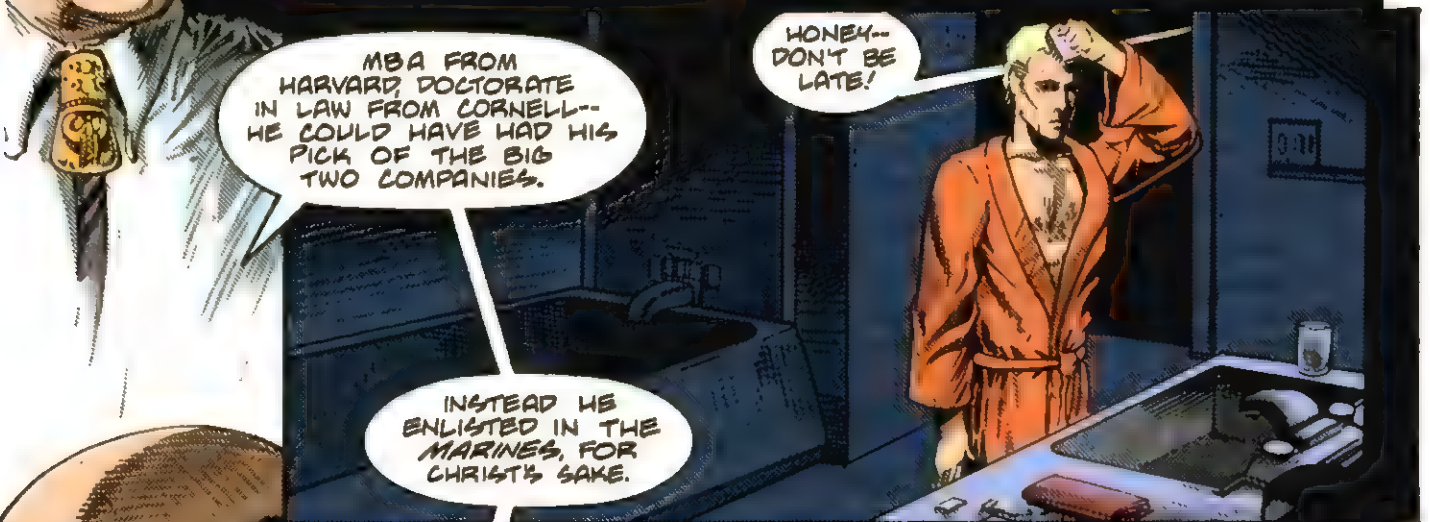




I WANT SOMEONE SPECIAL TO LOOK AFTER OUR INTERESTS. MASSEY DID A GOOD JOB ON THE MERGER. TELL ME ABOUT HIM.

PAT-- COFFEE'LL BE READY IN A MINUTE.

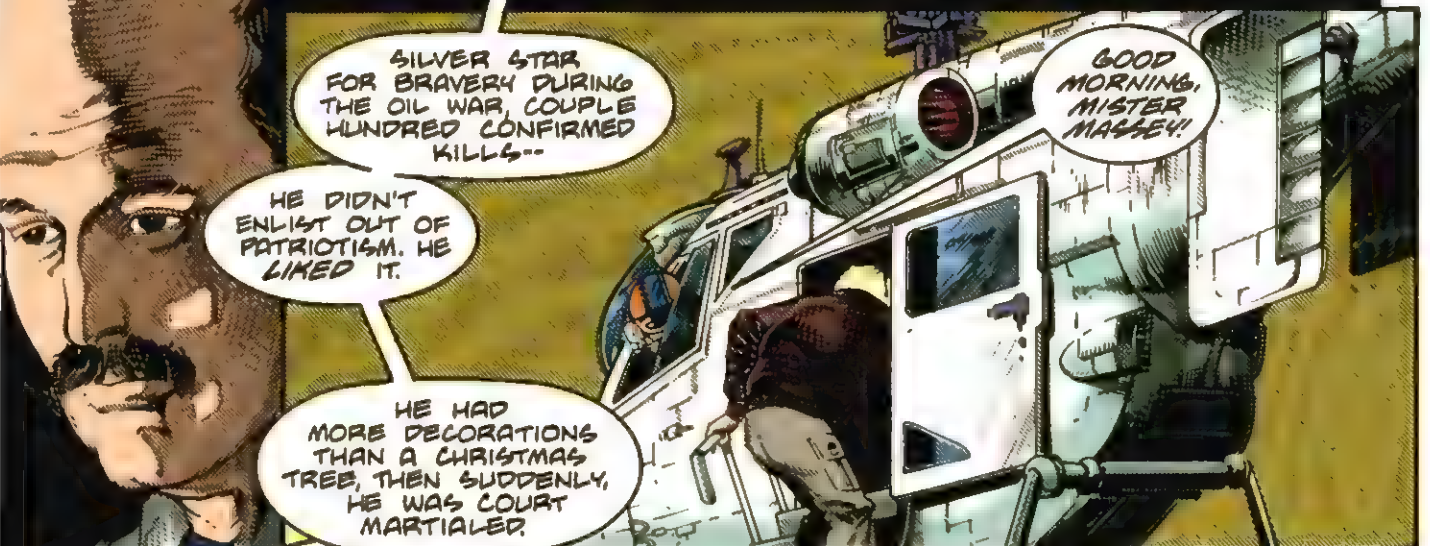
DADDY--WHY DO THEY CALL IT "THE WALL STREET JOURNAL"?



HONEY-- DON'T BE LATE!

MBA FROM HARVARD DOCTORATE IN LAW FROM CORNELL-- HE COULD HAVE HAD HIS PICK OF THE BIG TWO COMPANIES.

INSTEAD HE ENLISTED IN THE MARINES, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

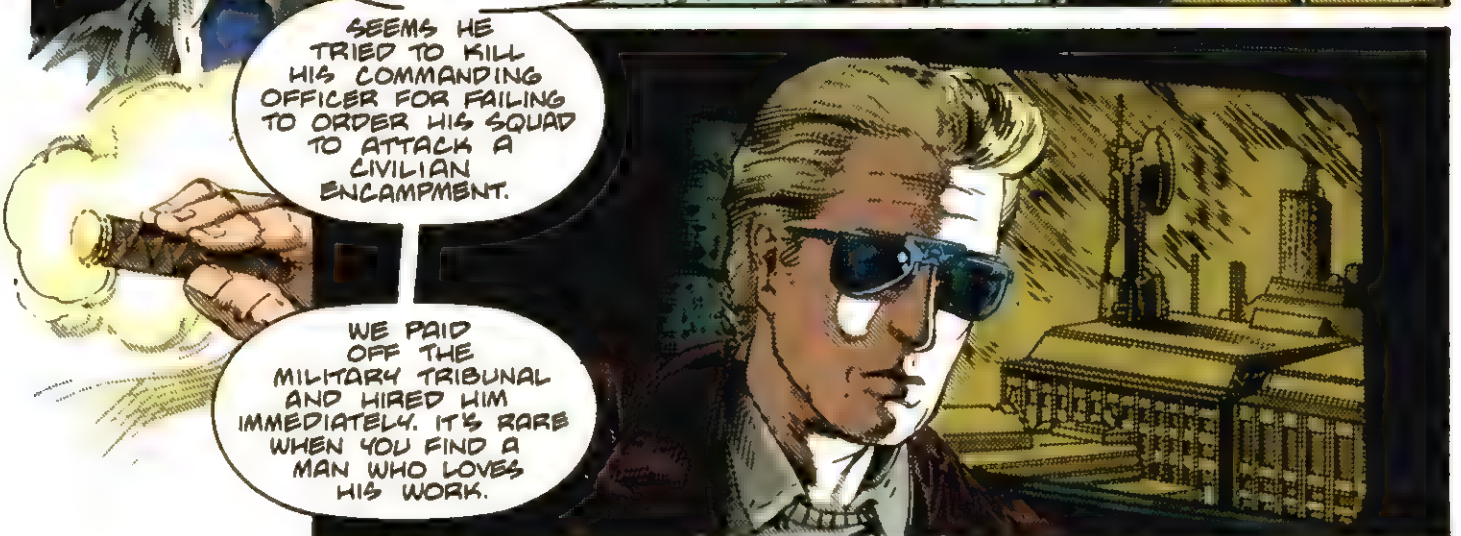


SILVER STAR FOR BRAVERY DURING THE OIL WAR, COUPLE HUNDRED CONFIRMED KILLS--

GOOD MORNING, MISTER MASSEY!!

HE DIDN'T ENLIST OUT OF PATRIOTISM. HE LIKED IT.

HE HAD MORE DECORATIONS THAN A CHRISTMAS TREE, THEN SUDDENLY, HE WAS COURT MARTIALED.



SEEMS HE TRIED TO KILL HIS COMMANDING OFFICER FOR FAILING TO ORDER HIS SQUAD TO ATTACK A CIVILIAN ENCAMPMENT.

WE PAID OFF THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL AND HIRED HIM IMMEDIATELY. IT'S RARE WHEN YOU FIND A MAN WHO LOVES HIS WORK.



THE DARKNESS
IS A BLANKET.

SOMETHING DRIPS
LIKE SWEAT, ALL
WARM AND
STICKY.

IT FEELS
GOOD.

FLY,
FLY AWAY, MY
BRAVE LITTLE
CAPTAIN--

WE WERE
ONE. GOD,
I LOVED
YOU.

THEN I WAS TORN FROM
YOU, FORCED INTO THIS
NAKED EXISTENCE, SO
ALONE AND COLD I
NEVER THOUGHT I'D
FEEL THAT LOVE AGAIN.

MY TRUE MOTHER IS
PART OF ME. I CAN
FEEL HER, SLIDING
WET IN MY THROAT,
FILLING MY LUNGS
AND MY STOMACH,
WRAPPING HER
FINGERS INSIDE SO
WARM, SO WARM--

HER TEETH GLITTER
LIKE THE STARS.
GOD, SHE IS
IMPOSSIBLY
BEAUTIFUL.

SHE LOVES ME MORE THAN
YOU EVER COULD.

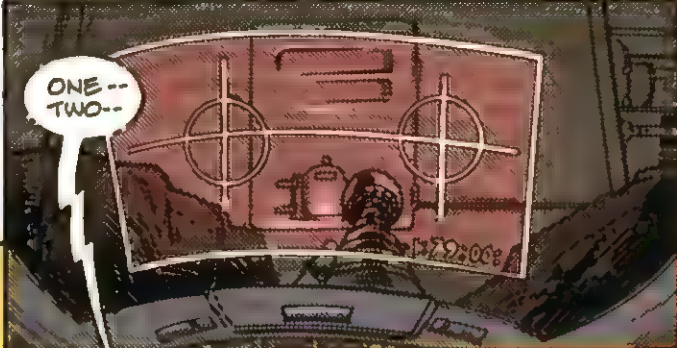


EASLEY! TRY TO CIRCLE BEHIND THE BUNKER AND FIND A SERVICE PORT! WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO BLAST THROUGH IT.

ROGER THAT. COVER ME!

I'VE ZEROED THE AFT PLATE. I'M GOING IN ON THREE.

COPY.



ONE--
TWO--

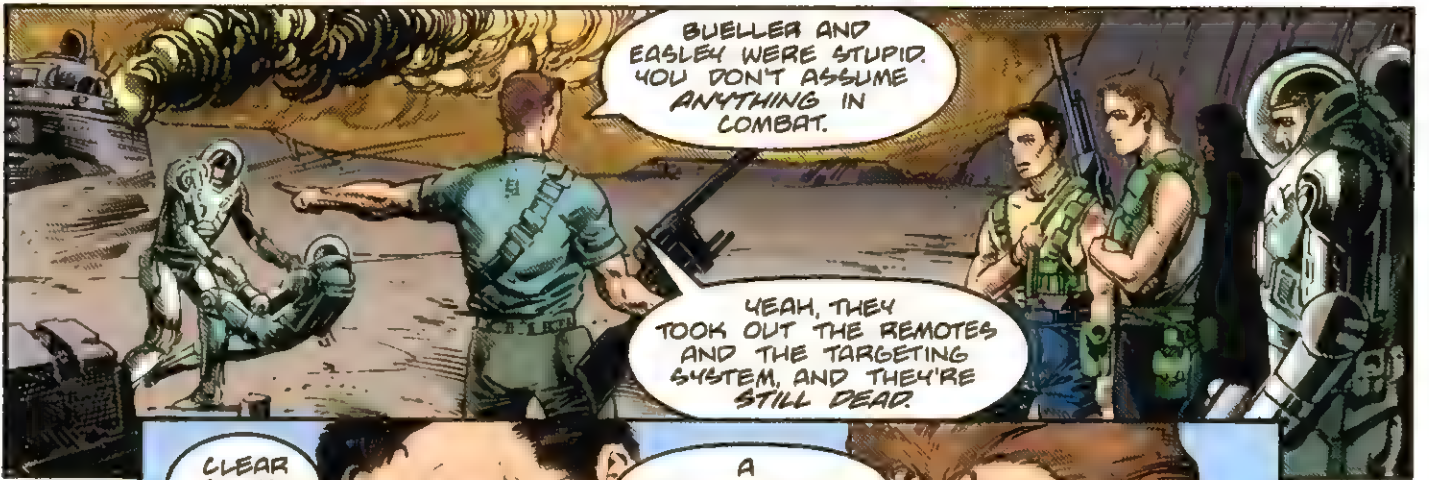


YEAH! DEAD ON, BUDDY! WE MUST HAVE CUT THE MAIN LINE!



YEAH, DEAD ON, "BUDDY."

AIGGGH!



I WAS IMPRESSED. EVERYONE ON THE SQUAD WAS TOP RATED IN ORDINANCE--BLINDERS, PROJECTORS, LOW-LEVEL NEUTRON STUFF, AND ALL THE CONVENTIONALS. DOL ORONA HAD PUT SOME THOUGHT INTO THIS.

C'MON, BLAKE, GET IT UP AND OVER--!

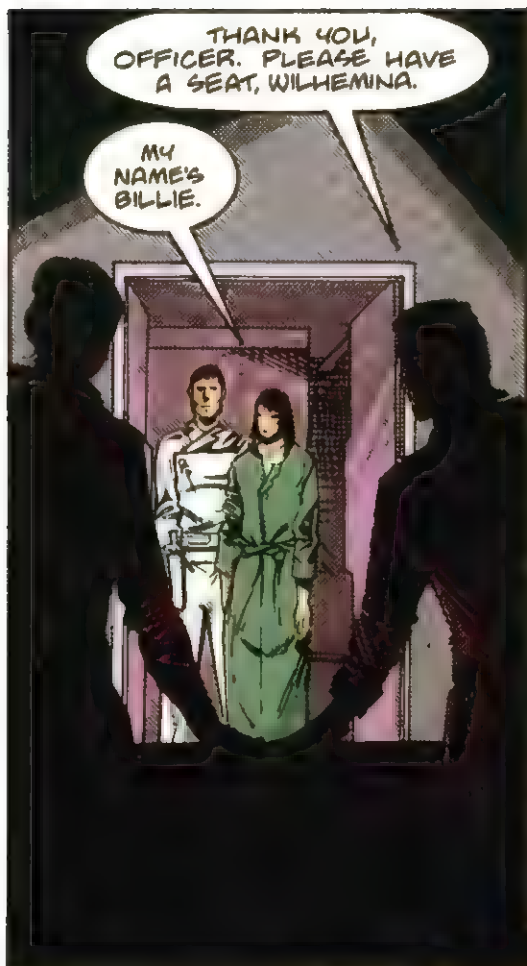
THEY'D BEEN WORKING AS A UNIT SINCE INCEPTION. JUST OVER A YEAR. IT SHOWED.

FUNNY HOW MUCH THEY REMINDED ME OF THE RIM TEAM.

MOVE IT!

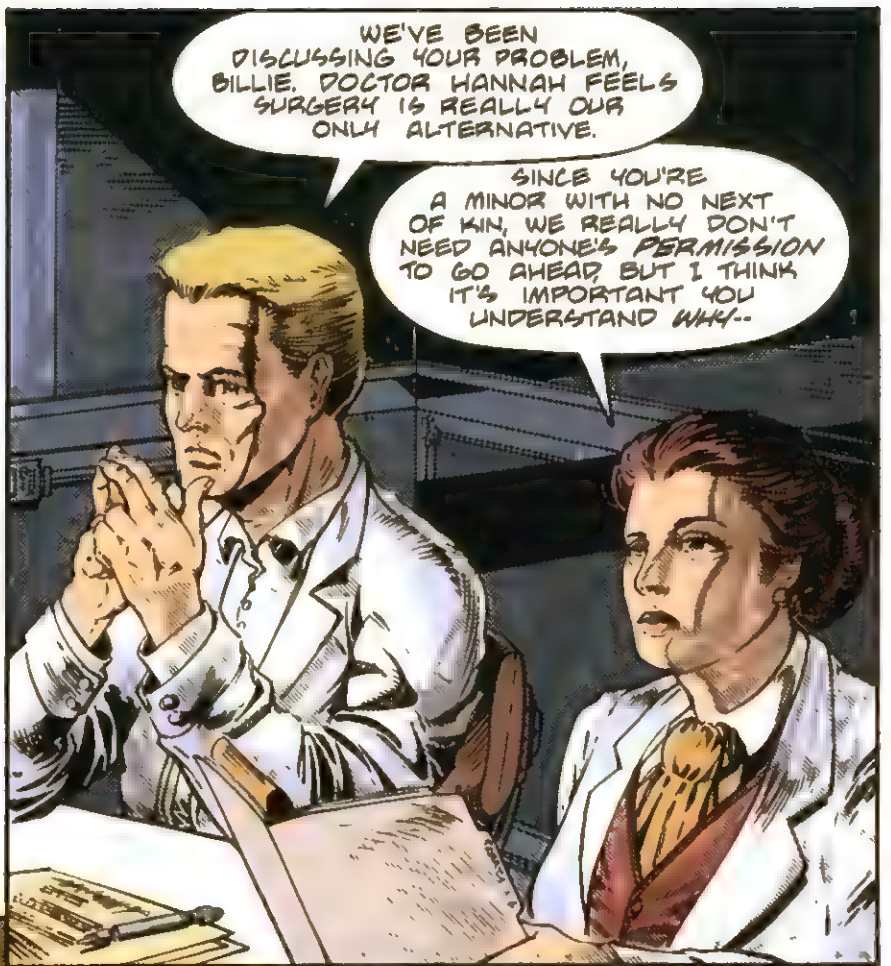
I KEPT THINKING ABOUT RIM, REMEMBERING WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE PART OF A TEAM, TO HAVE FRIENDS WHO WOULD DIE FOR YOU, FRIENDS WHO--

--NO! FORGET RIM. MY FRIENDS ARE DEAD. REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED AFTER-- THE PAIN, THE LONELINESS. THIS WASN'T ABOUT DUTY, HONOR, LOYALTY-- THIS WAS FOR ME AND NO ONE ELSE.



THANK YOU, OFFICER. PLEASE HAVE A SEAT, WILHEMINA.

MY NAME'S BILLIE.



WE'VE BEEN DISCUSSING YOUR PROBLEM, BILLIE. DOCTOR HANNAH FEELS SURGERY IS REALLY OUR ONLY ALTERNATIVE.

SINCE YOU'RE A MINOR WITH NO NEXT OF KIN, WE REALLY DON'T NEED ANYONE'S PERMISSION TO GO AHEAD, BUT I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT YOU UNDERSTAND WHY--



I-- I'LL BE GOOD.

I'LL TRY HARDER AND--

WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE, BILLIE. TRYING ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH ANYMORE.

YOU HAVE FORCED US TO TAKE DRASTIC MEASURES.

IT'S REALLY A MINOR OPERATION.

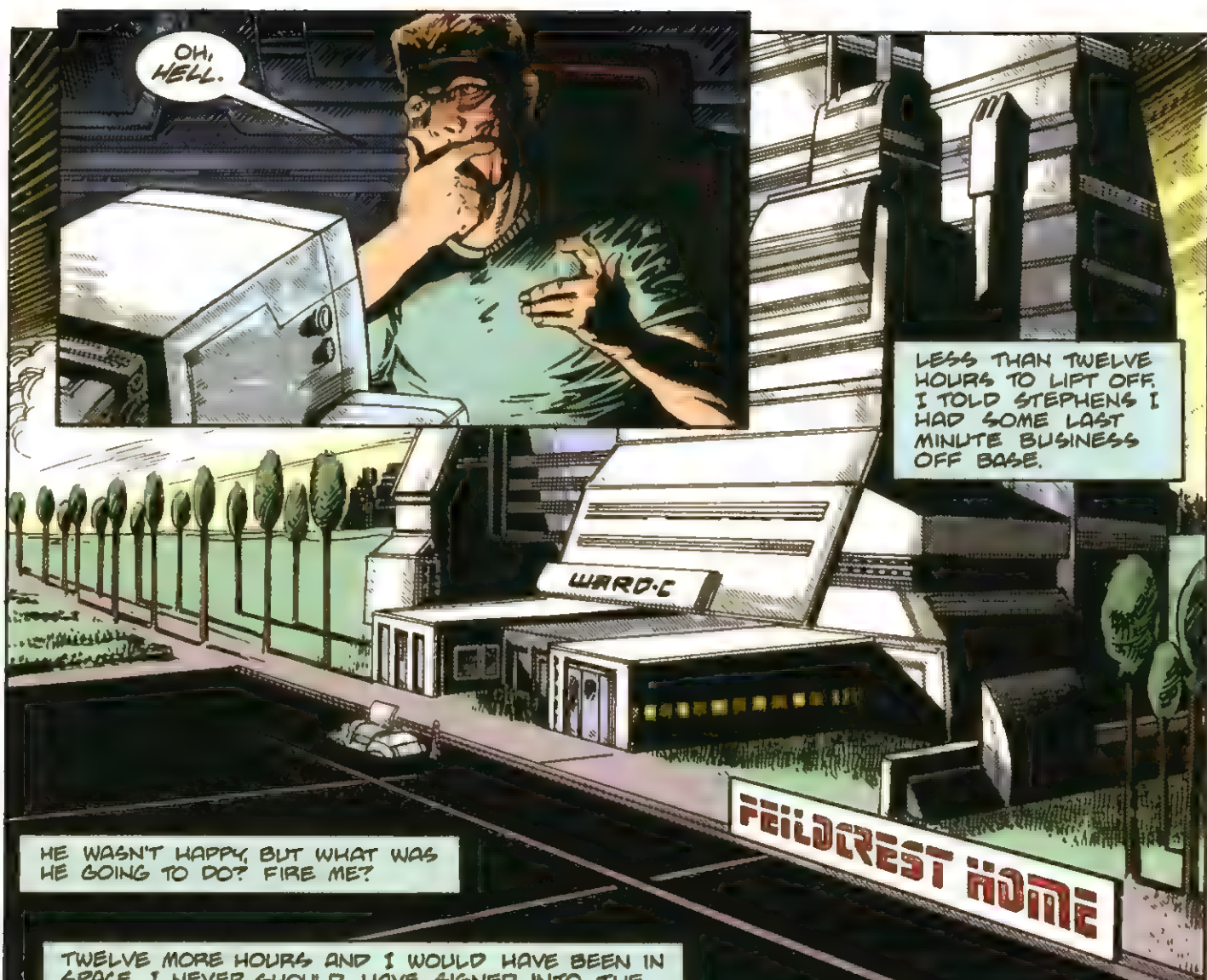
WE TARGET THE SPECIFIC AREAS IN THE BRAIN RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR PROBLEMS, AND USE A LASER SCALPEL TO SEVER THE--

--BURN THE TISSUE--

--WON'T FEEL A THING--

--REALLY QUITE PAINLESS--

--EVER AGAIN--

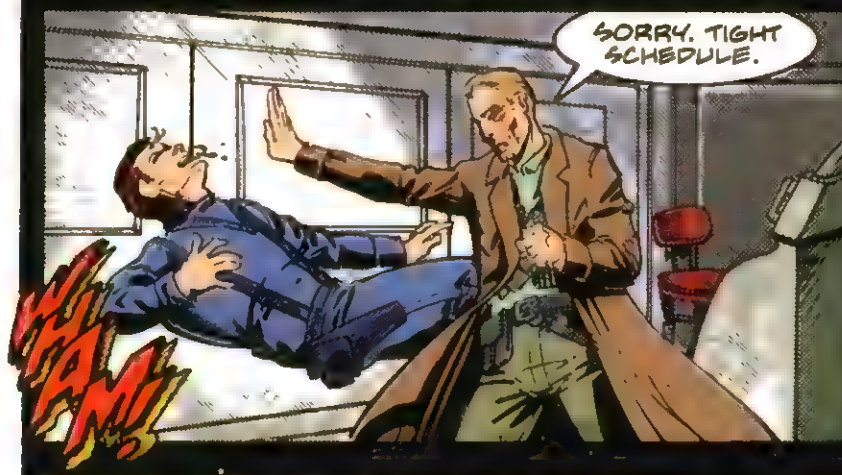


HE WASN'T HAPPY, BUT WHAT WAS HE GOING TO DO? FIRE ME?

TWELVE MORE HOURS AND I WOULD HAVE BEEN IN SPACE. I NEVER SHOULD HAVE SIGNED INTO THE SECURITY MAINFRAME. ACCESSING THE INSTITUTION'S PATIENT FILES WAS A PIECE OF CAKE. I GUESS I WAS CURIOUS.



HEY, YOU HAVE TO PASS THE RETINAL AND V/C SCAN BEFORE--



WHY'D I SEE HER IN THE FIRST PLACE? MAYBE I THOUGHT SHE'D UNDERSTAND-- MAYBE I JUST WANTED SOMEONE HERE TO REMEMBER ME WHEN IT WAS OVER-- CHRIST, I DON'T KNOW--





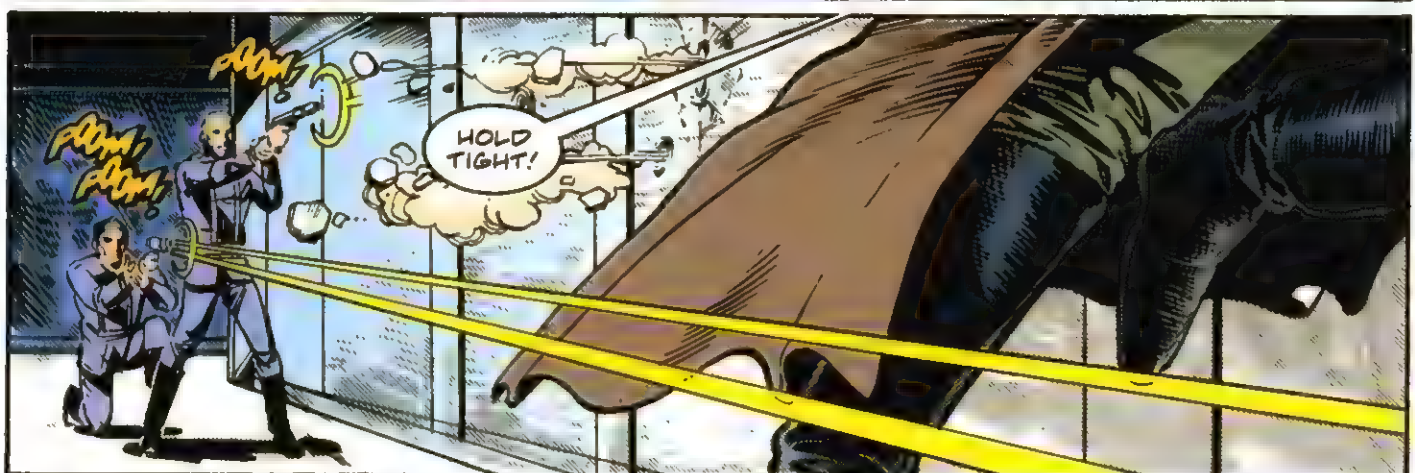
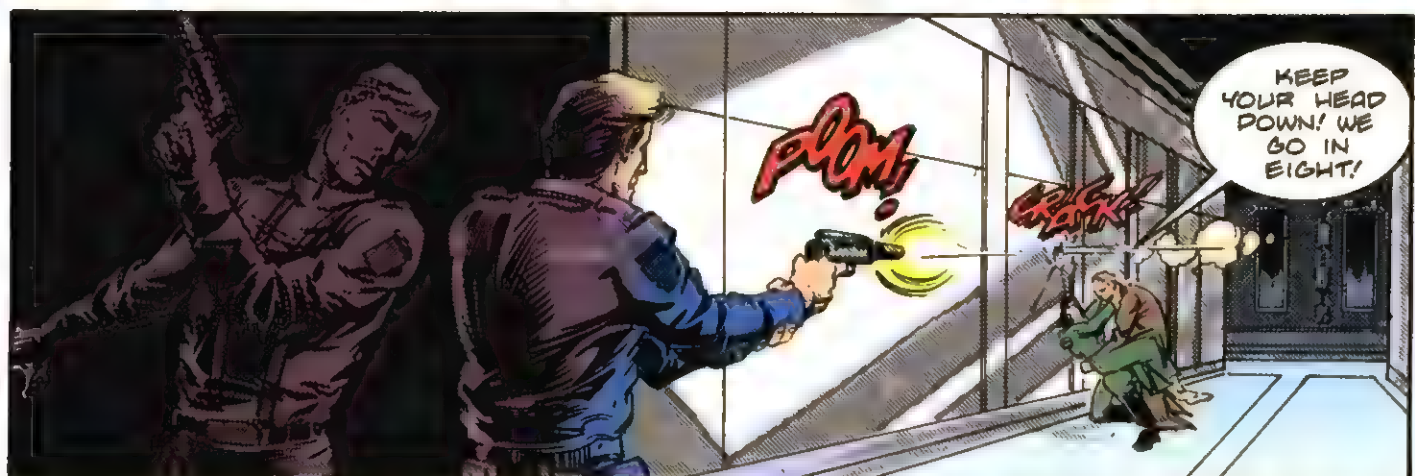
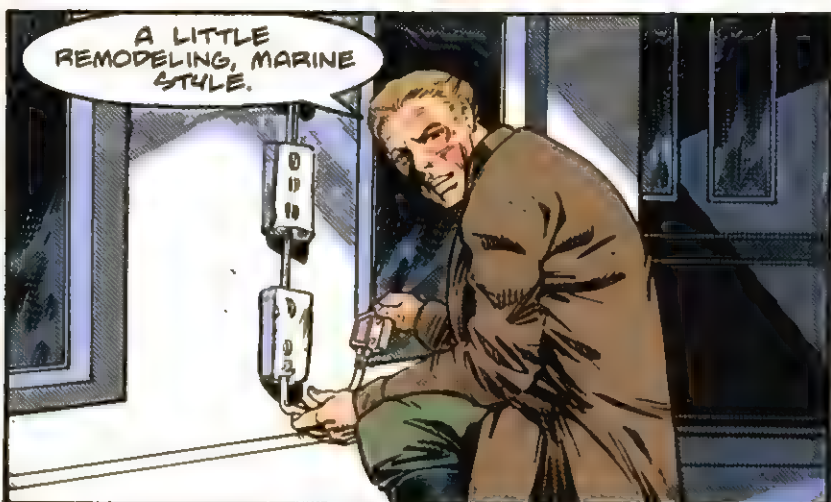
BILLIE'S ROOM WAS ON THE FORTIETH FLOOR OF THE MEDICAL HIGHRISE. EVEN WITH THE AUTOMATIC SECURITY SYSTEM BLINKED, THEY'D HAVE THE GROUND EXITS COVERED BY NOW.

DAMN, KID, YOU LOOK LIKE SHIT.

LOOK... WHO'S TALKING... *CUF* *CUF*...



A LITTLE REMODELING, MARINE STYLE.



THE WALL BLEW OUT FROM THE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION AND WE WENT ALONG WITH IT. NICE VIEW.

THE JET RESCUE TECHNOLOGY HAD BEEN DEVELOPED AFTER THE WORLD TRADE CENTER SMOKED IN '24. I'D 'BORROWED' THE SHIP AND THE HAND-HELD CONTROLLER FROM CIVILIAN OPERATIONS.

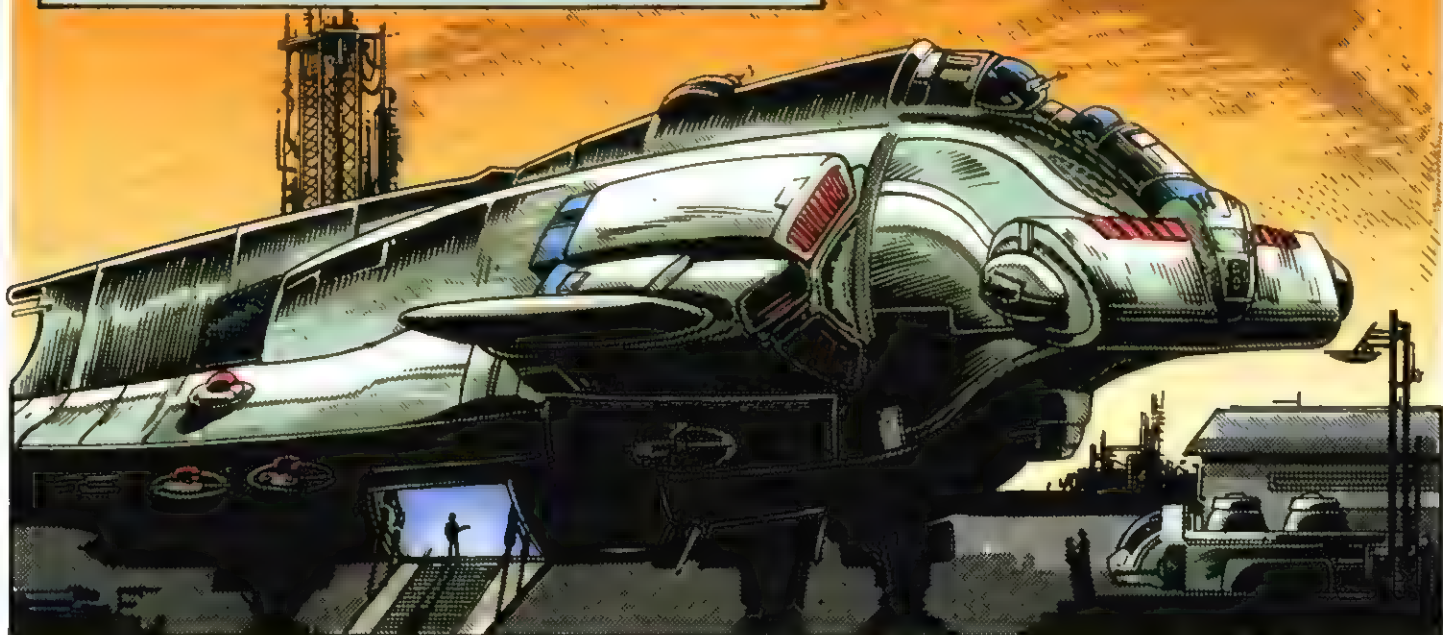
THE SHIP HAD BEEN DESIGNED FOR HIGH-RISE FIRE RESCUE, BUT I REMEMBER WHAT SERGEANT APONE USED TO SAY: 'MARINES DON'T QUIT. THEY ADAPT.'

BY THE TIME THEY TRACED US BACK TO BASE, IT WOULD BE TOO LATE.

ONE OF THE JOYS OF TAKING A SUICIDE MISSION, I SUPPOSE--REPRIMANDS AND COURT-MARTIALS LOSE THEIR STING.

I FLIPPED OFF THE REMOTE AND WE WERE MACH 2 BEFORE THE LAST PIECE OF PLASTER HIT GROUND LEVEL.

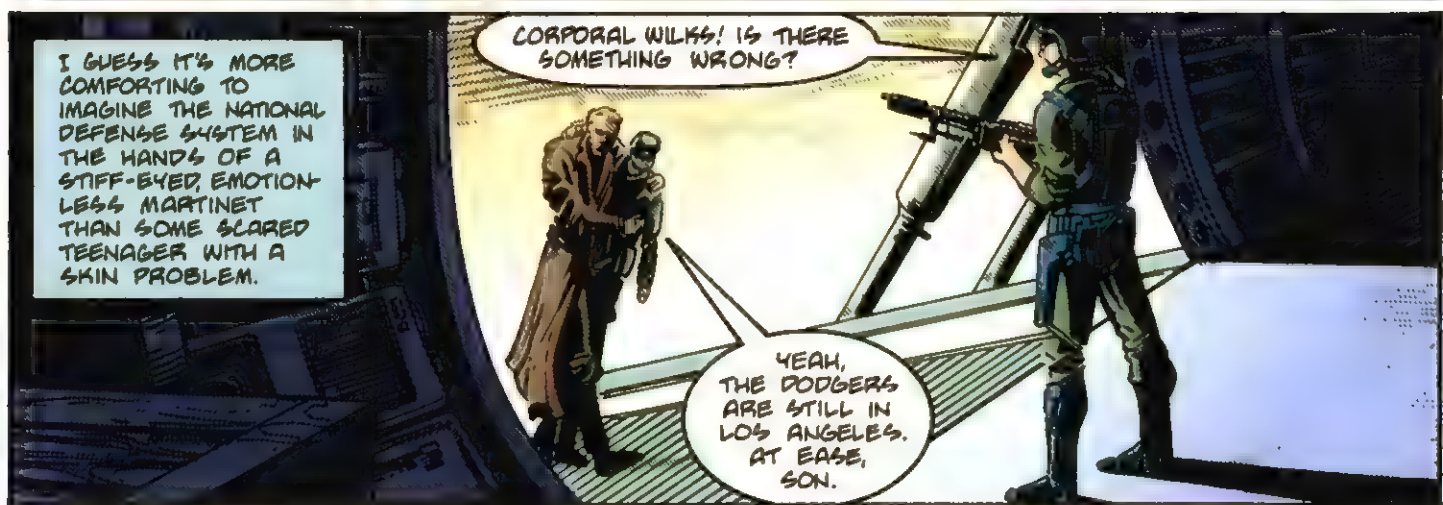
FOR YEARS, THE GENERAL PUBLIC HAD BEEN FED THIS IMAGE OF MARINES AS "INTELLECTUAL WARRIORS"--COLLEGE DIPLOMA IN ONE HAND, M-90 RAPID FIRE IN THE OTHER.



I GUESS IT'S MORE COMFORTING TO IMAGINE THE NATIONAL DEFENSE SYSTEM IN THE HANDS OF A STIFF-EYED, EMOTION-LESS MARTINET THAN SOME SCARED TEENAGER WITH A SKIN PROBLEM.

CORPORAL WILKS! IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG?

YEAH, THE DODGERS ARE STILL IN LOS ANGELES. AT EASE, SON.



AFTER A WHILE, THE MARINES THEMSELVES BOUGHT THE MYTH. BIG MISTAKE. SOLDIERS HAVE THE SAME WANTS AND DESIRES AS EVERYONE ELSE. SOMETIMES THEY DO THINGS NOT BECAUSE IT'S RIGHT OR WRONG, BUT BECAUSE THEY MUST.

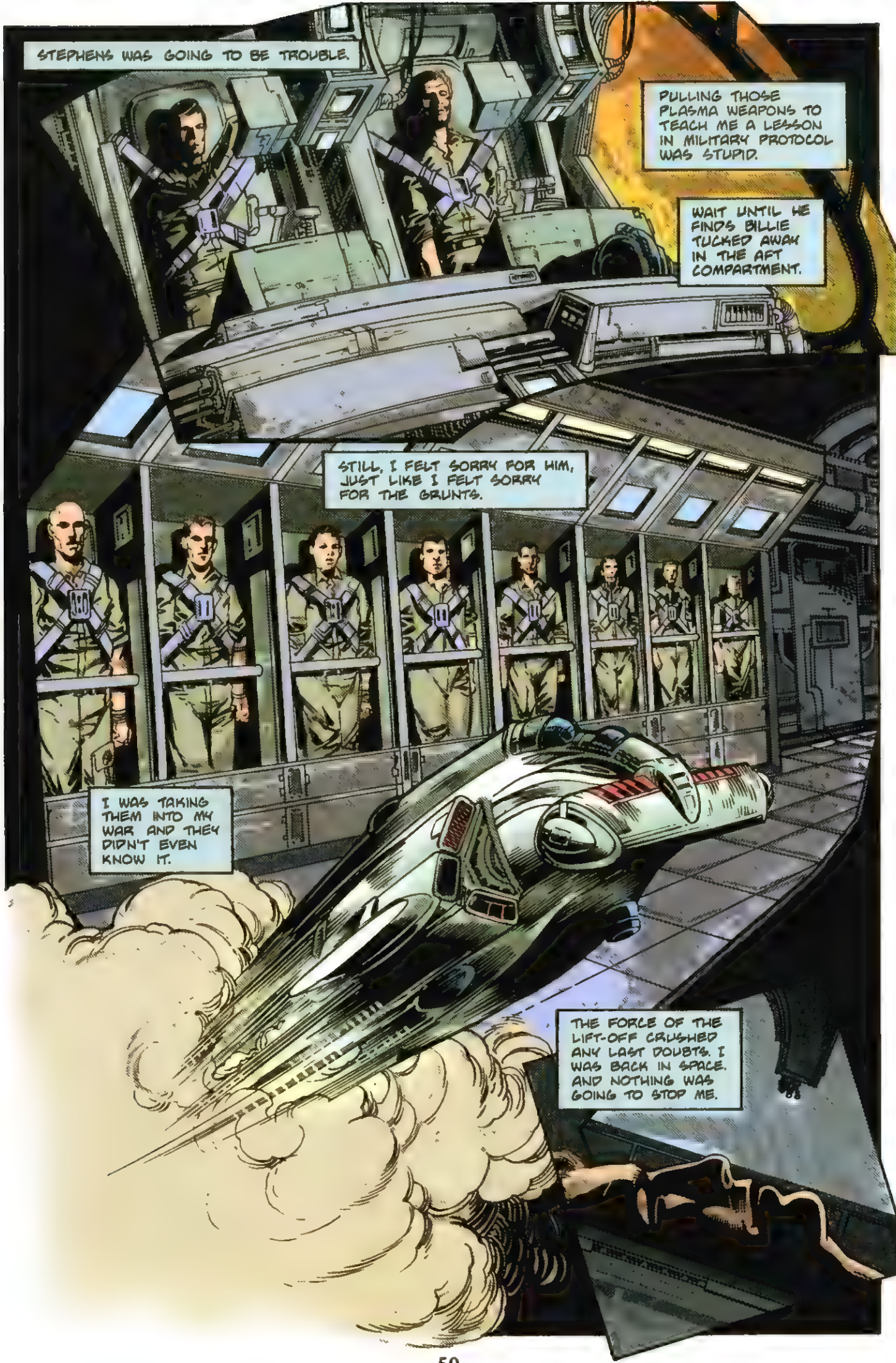
WE'RE GOING BACK, AREN'T WE? WE'RE REALLY GOING BACK!



FOR INSTANCE, NOBODY EXPECTS A MARINE CORPORAL TO SMUGGLE AN UNAUTHORIZED PASSENGER ABOARD A TOP-SECURITY MILITARY FLIGHT.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY IT WAS SO DAMN EASY.





STEPHENS WAS GOING TO BE TROUBLE.

PULLING THOSE
PLASMA WEAPONS TO
TEACH ME A LESSON
IN MILITARY PROTOCOL
WAS STUPID.

WAIT UNTIL HE
FINDS BILLIE
TUCKED AWAY
IN THE AFT
COMPARTMENT.

STILL, I FELT SORRY FOR HIM,
JUST LIKE I FELT SORRY
FOR THE GRUNTS.

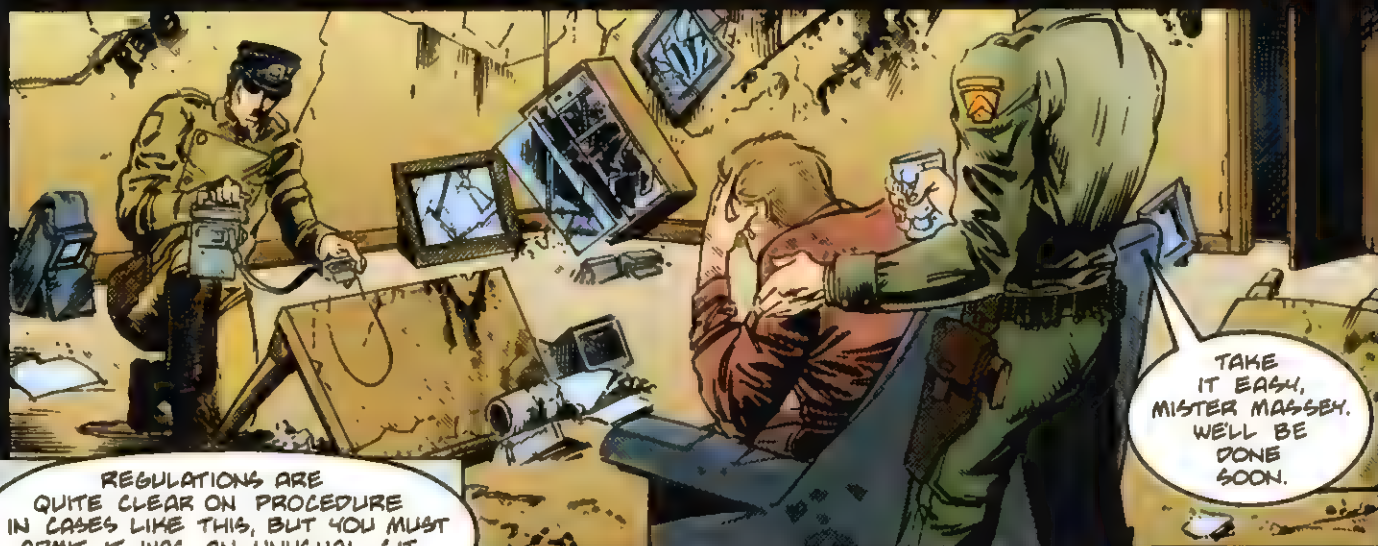
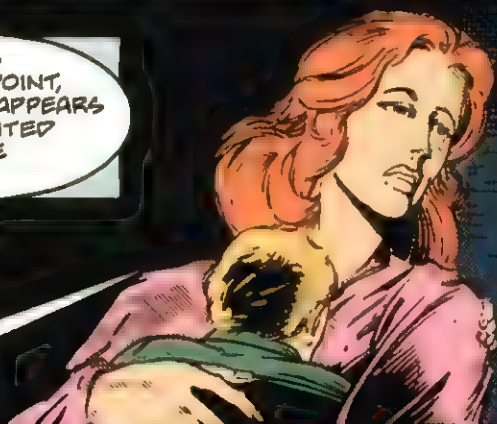
I WAS TAKING
THEM INTO MY
WAR AND THEY
DIDN'T EVEN
KNOW IT.

THE FORCE OF THE
LIFT-OFF CRUSHED
ANY LAST DOUBTS. I
WAS BACK IN SPACE.
AND NOTHING WAS
GOING TO STOP ME.



INFORMATION'S
SKETCHY AT THIS POINT,
BUT MASSEY'S WIFE APPEARS
TO HAVE CONFRONTED
HIM ABOUT THE
DOCUMENT.

PAT--WE
JUST SAW THIS
HORRIBLE--THING--
ON THE READ
SCREEN--



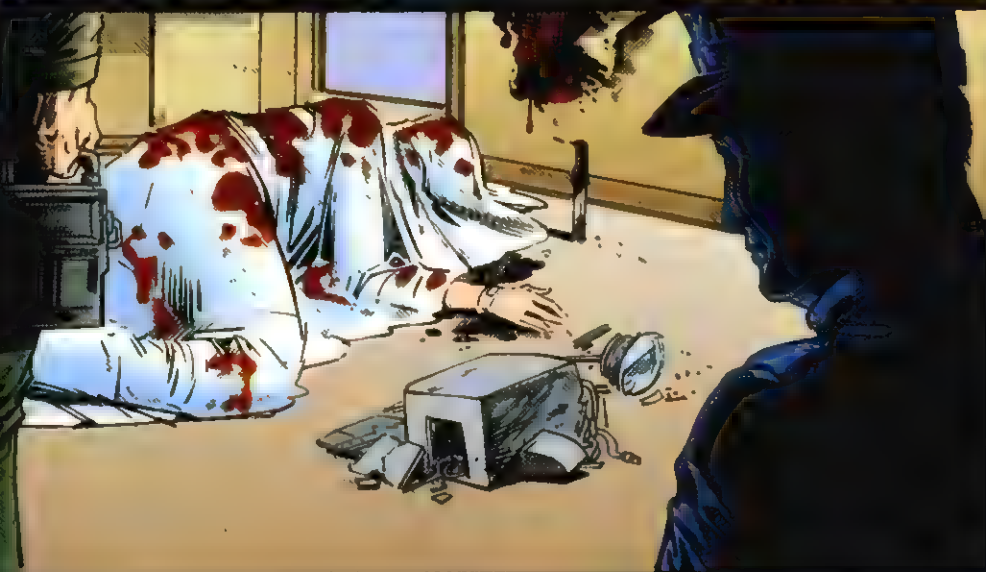
REGULATIONS ARE
QUITE CLEAR ON PROCEDURE
IN CASES LIKE THIS, BUT YOU MUST
ADMIT IT WAS AN UNUSUAL SIT-
UATION. HE'D BEEN MARRIED
CLOSE TO SIX YEARS.

HE TOOK
PAINS TO MAKE IT
LOOK LIKE A ROBBERY
GONE BAD. THE POLICE
DIDN'T SUSPECT A
THING.

UNDER THE
CIRCUMSTANCES, MASSEY
PERFORMED ADMIRABLY. I
HAD THE PSYCH BOYS DO A
WORK-UP ON HIM RIGHT BEFORE
LIFTOFF AND HE REGISTERED
WELL WITHIN TOLERABLE
LIMITS.

I
WONDER
HOW IT FEELS--
BEING A
SOCIOPATH, I
MEAN.

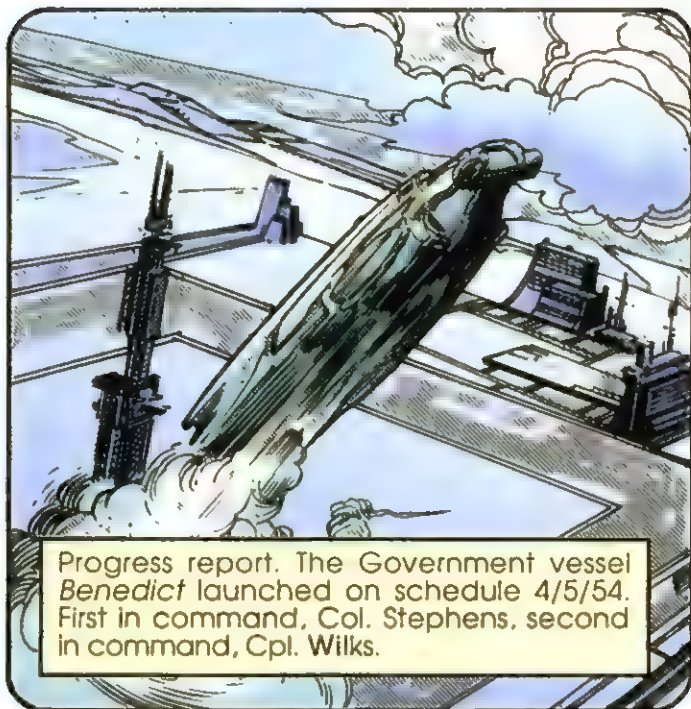
I WOULD
IMAGINE IT'S QUITE
LIBERATING.



EYES ONLY
DATA LOCK

BIONATIONAL INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

OPERATION: OUTREACH



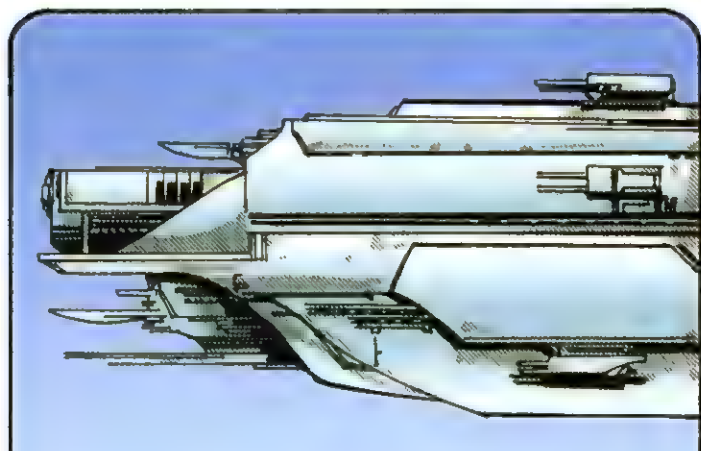
Progress report. The Government vessel *Benedict* launched on schedule 4/5/54. First in command, Col. Stephens, second in command, Cpl. Wilks.



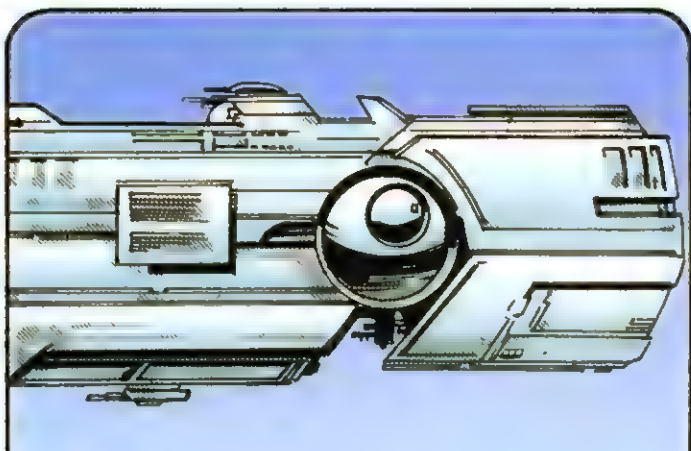
Our chase ship *K-014* launched in pursuit immediately thereafter, captained by Bionational Executive Assistant Patrick Massey.



The government is seeking to retrieve specimens of an alien lifeform for its Weapons Development Program. If they are successful, this could seriously impact Bionational's claim of sole patent right on the new lifeform technology.



The *K-014*'s mission is twofold. First, to follow the *Benedict* to the alien homeworld and gather biological data on the lifeform.



Second, to inhibit the *Benedict*'s crew from retrieving a viable test subject. Captain Massey has been given *carte blanche* toward this end.

In the interim, our Bionational research team continues its examination of the human specimen salvaged from the ejected pilot's pod of the cargo vessel *Junket*.

SOMEONE'S OUT THERE, MOTHER.

CARGO EXPRESS IDENTIFICATION



VALID FOR TYPE 5



8 2 2 5 • 7 0 8 3 1
NON-TRANSFERABLE

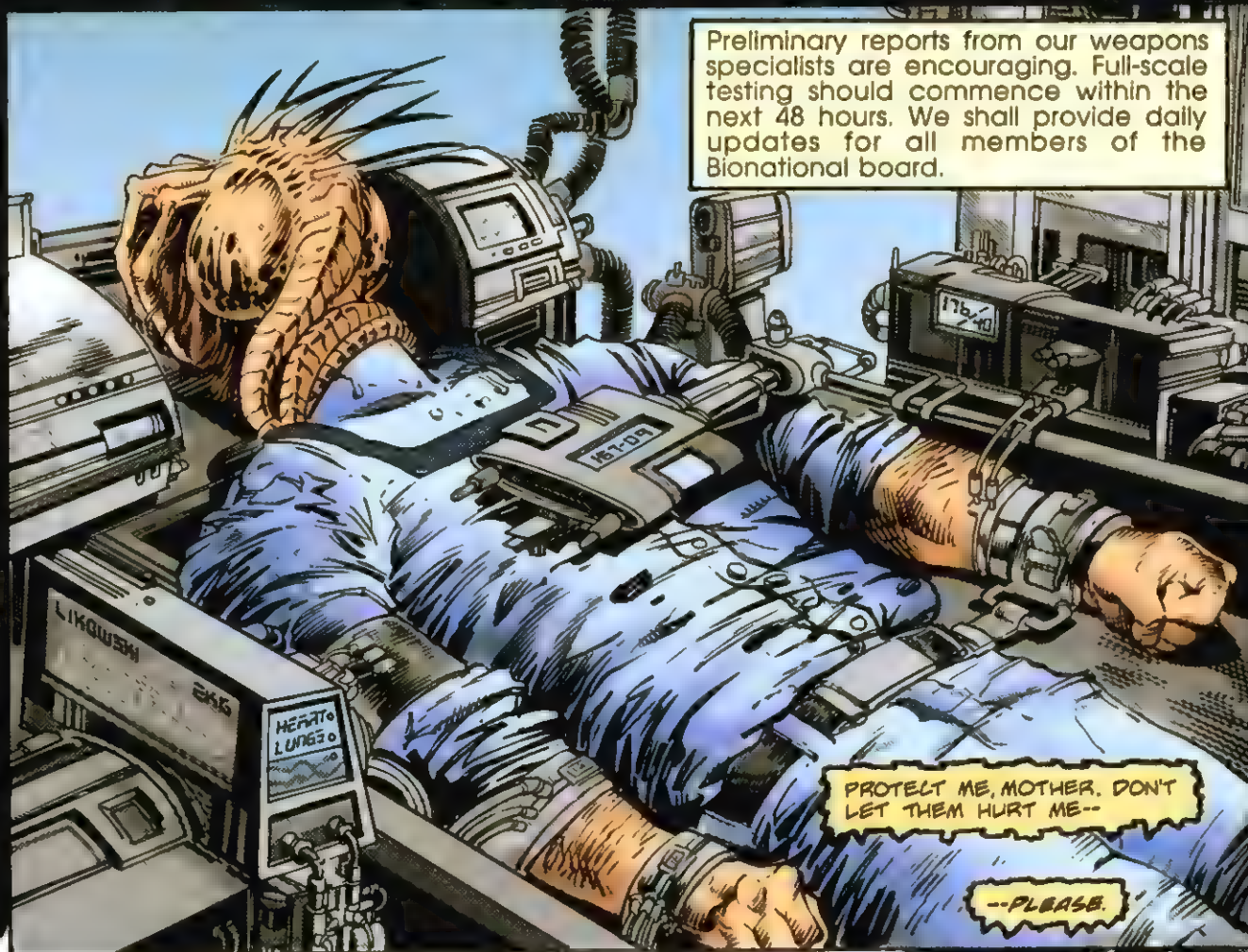
JAMES LIKOWSKI...SECTION 10-B611
PILOT...CLASSIFICATION 2-S

Human specimen's pod had been damaged, causing loss of atmosphere, but vital signs were somehow preserved by the infusion of the alien lifeform.

After retrieval, both specimens were brought to Bionational's Houston labs for analysis.

SOMETHING TOUCHES ME, MOTHER. I CAN FEEL IT IN MY ARMS, MY CHEST--

Preliminary reports from our weapons specialists are encouraging. Full-scale testing should commence within the next 48 hours. We shall provide daily updates for all members of the Bionational board.



PROTECT ME, MOTHER. DON'T LET THEM HURT ME--

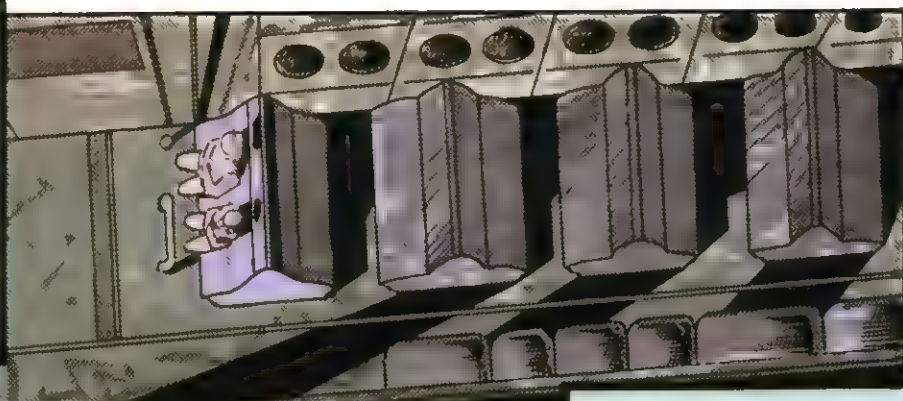
--PLEASE.

Dr. Ranier: Start wherever you'd like.

Patient Gonzales: Okay. Okay.
(pause) I'm with my mother. We're still in L.A.—

Dr. Ranier: Your mother died several years ago?

Patient Gonzales: Cancer. (pause)
We're taking the Wilshire tube into downtown L.A. Right then I knew I was dreaming...I've never seen an empty tube.



Patient Gonzales: All of a sudden, we hear this loud—
scraping sound—

Dr. Ranier: Scraping? How do you mean?

Patient Gonzales: Like...like
fingernails ripping fabric.
(pause) Then, suddenly,
the car stops—



Patient Gonzales: Something was trying to...get in. I pounded on the door, hoping someone would hear us—



Patient Gonzales: Then these—*things* started to—claw into the car. I ran to my mother and she made this sick, bubbling sound, deep in her chest—



Patient Gonzales: It was just a stupid nightmare, right? Right?

Dr. Morgan: What happened after the television came on?

Patient Culp: First, there was only distortion—but then something started to—

Patient Culp: — come at me, from inside the screen —

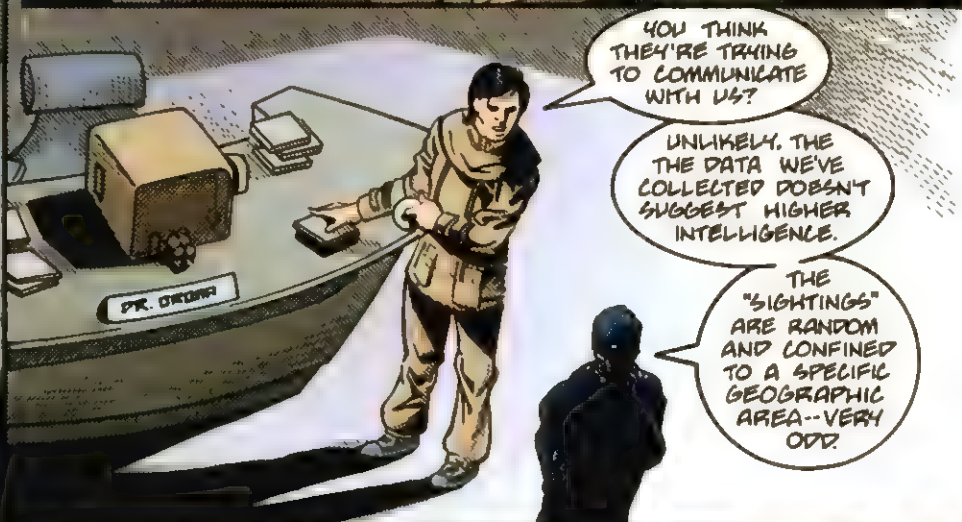
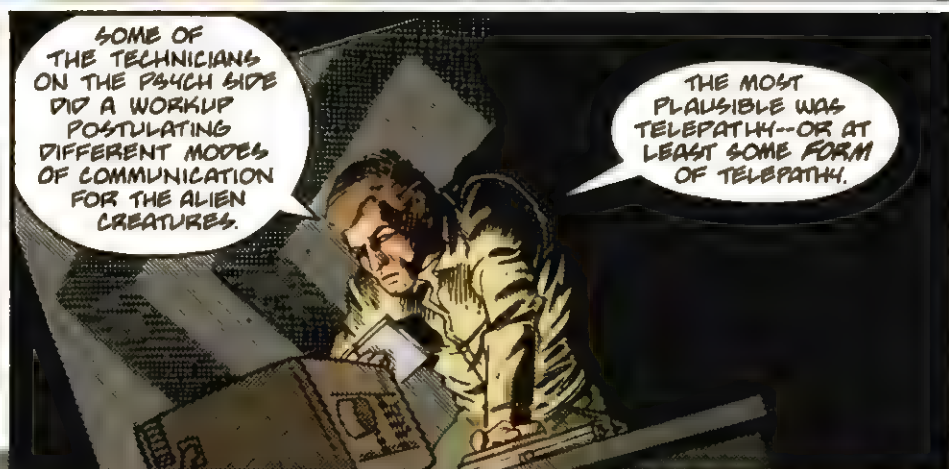
Patient Duncan: I must have dosed off. The next thing I knew, the stewardess was standing next to me. I remember thinking that she reminded me of someone...

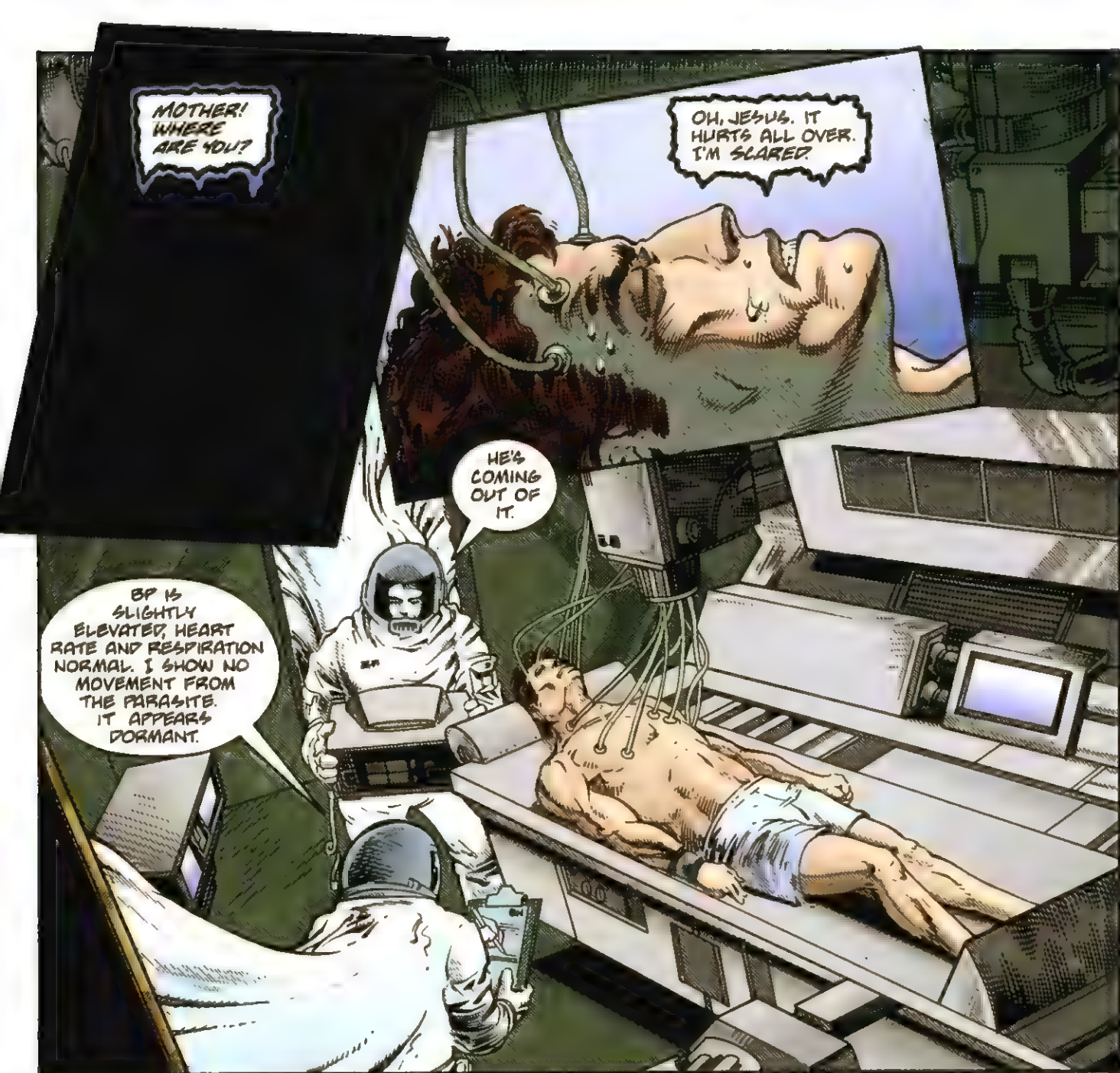
Dr. Frankel: Who?

Patient Duncan: (pause) It's going to sound funny, but—my mother.

Patient Duncan: All at once, these teeth—they...it ripped right through her chest—like it had been inside her the whole time —

Patient Lockwood: I kept screaming for my Mommy, but she wasn't there. Just the monster—coming closer and closer —



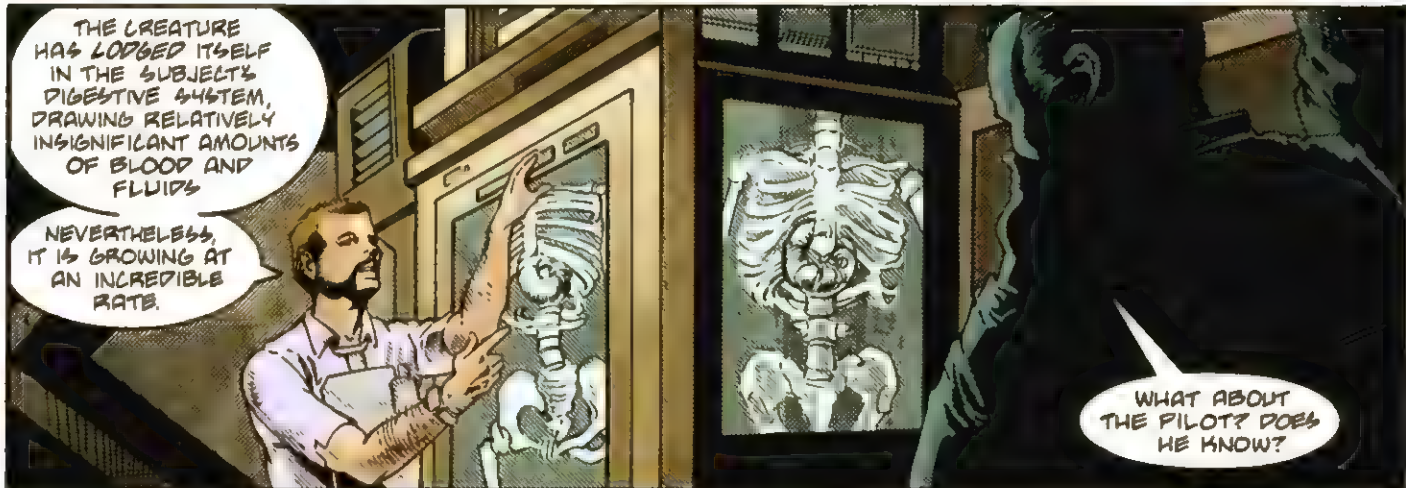




PLEASE, COULD SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED? I WANT TO SEE MY WIFE-- PLEASE--

HE LOOKS NORMAL ENOUGH.

HELL, HE'S WORTH BILLIONS. I WISH EVERYONE WERE THAT "NORMAL."



THE CREATURE HAS LODGED ITSELF IN THE SUBJECT'S DIGESTIVE SYSTEM, DRAWING RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS OF BLOOD AND FLUIDS

NEVERTHELESS, IT IS GROWING AT AN INCREDIBLE RATE.

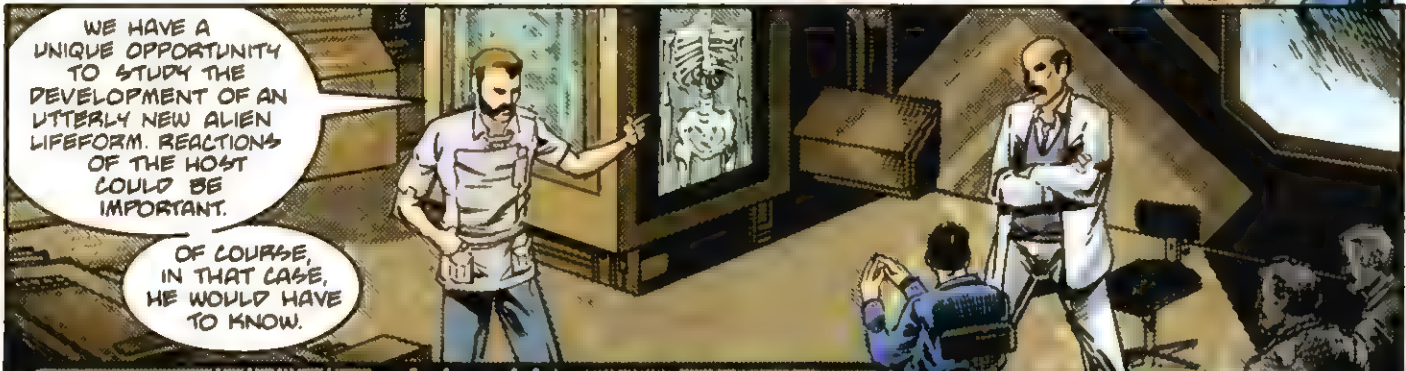
WHAT ABOUT THE PILOT? DOES HE KNOW?



THERE'S BEEN SOME--DISCUSSION--ON THAT POINT.

ETHICAL QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED REGARDING THE PROPRIETY OF INFORMING THE SUBJECT, CONSIDERING THE ULTIMATE--PROGNOSIS.

AND YOU? WHAT DO YOU THINK, DRYNEM?

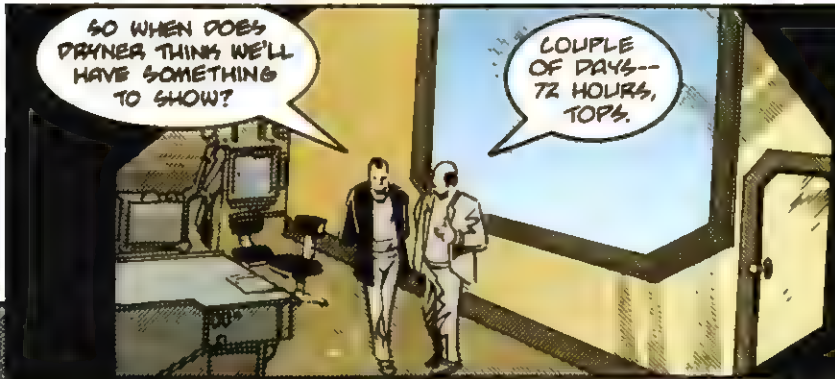
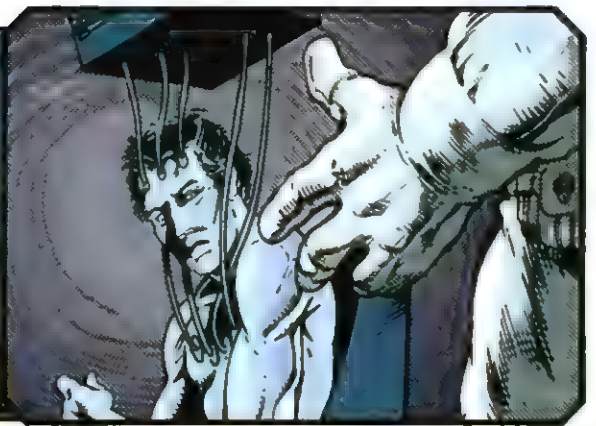


WE HAVE A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN UTTERLY NEW ALIEN LIFEFORM. REACTIONS OF THE HOST COULD BE IMPORTANT.

OF COURSE, IN THAT CASE, HE WOULD HAVE TO KNOW.



THEN TELL HIM.





SALVAJE!
WHERE THE
HELL HAVE YOU
BEEN?

STUDYING.



YEAH?
WELL, STUDY
THIS.

A COUPLE
OF GOVERNMENT
SUITS DROPPED BY
THE SHOP TODAY. IT
SEEMS THEY'RE REAL
INTERESTED IN
CHANNEL 2343.

WHAT
DID YOU
TELL
THEM?



I DIDN'T TELL THEM
SHIT. IF THEY KNEW I WAS
HOOKING UP ILLEGALS THEY'D
PULL MY LICENSE AND I'D
LOSE ALL MY MILITARY
CONTRACTS.



THEN
EVERYTHING
IS FINE.

NO,
EVERYTHING
IS NOT
FINE.

LOOK, I'VE
BEEN HOOKING
UP YOU RELIGIOUS
PSYCH JOBS FOR
THREE YEARS
NOW...



AND
I'VE NEVER HAD
PROBLEMS WITH
THE FCC, COPS,
OR ANYBODY
ELSE--

UNTIL
NOW.



DAMN
IT, SALVAJE--
WHAT THE HELL
IS THAT
THING?



THE
MESSIAH.
THE IMMACULATE
INCUBATION.
GOD.

YOU'RE OUT OF
YOUR MIND! I'M THROUGH,
SALVAJE! I'M NOT
RISKING--

RISK?
YOU TALK
TO ME OF
RISK?

AGGGH..
YOU'RE
CRAZY--!

WOMP!

DON'T BE
AFRAID OF HIM.
BELIEVE IN HIM. WE
WILL CONTINUE THE
MESSAGE AND
FIND THE OTHERS
WHO'VE SEEN
THE VISION.

LOOK
AT HIM!

YOU'RE
NOTHING, I'M
NOTHING! ONLY
VESSELS, HERE
TO SERVE
THE TRUE
MESSIAH...

...GLORIFIED
IN HAVING BEEN
CHOSEN FOR THE
ULTIMATE
COMMUNION.

THE
BROADCASTS
WILL CONTINUE.
DON'T BE AFRAID
OF THE GOVERNMENT,
BE AFRAID OF
ME.

NO!



I PULLED BILLIE OUT
OF THE SPARE CARGO
LOCK 12 HOURS AFTER
LIFT OFF.

I FELT SORRY
FOR HER.

IT LOOKED LIKE
THE DRUGS WERE
WEARING OFF,
THOUGH IT WAS
HARD TO TELL.

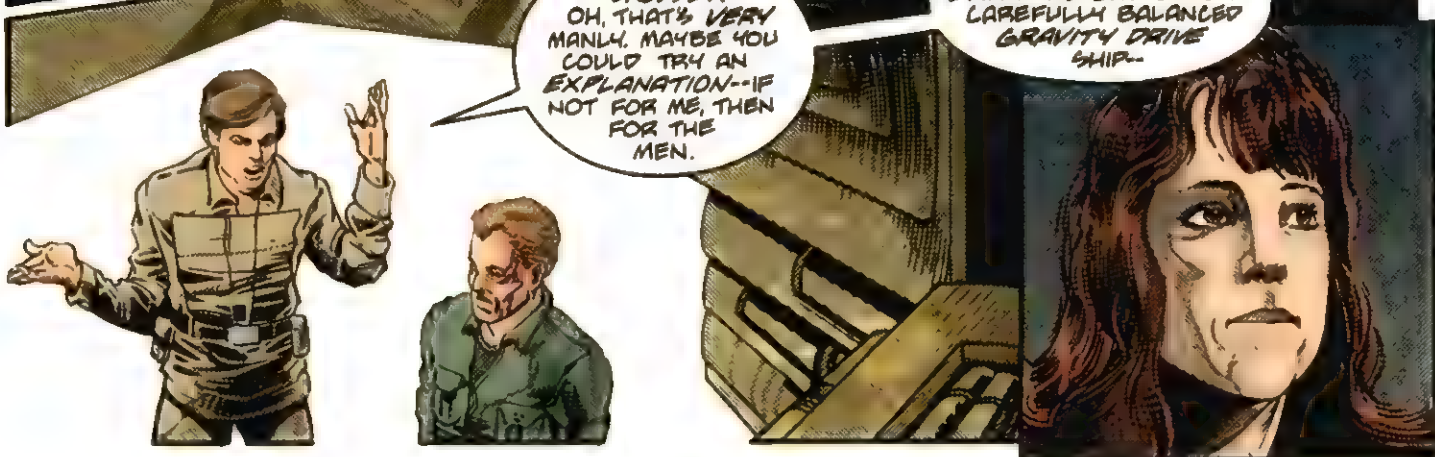
STEPHENS TOOK IT
ABOUT AS WELL
AS EXPECTED.



I TOLD THE
BASE COMMANDER YOU
WERE UNRELIABLE, WILKS.
BUT THIS-- THIS IS
INSANITY!

WHAT
THE HELL
WERE YOU
THINKING?
DID YOU
THINK AT
ALL?

I
OFFER,
NO EXCUSES
SIR. I DID
WHAT--



NO
EXCUSES!
OH, THAT'S VERY
MANLY. MAYBE YOU
COULD TRY AN
EXPLANATION--IF
NOT FOR ME, THEN
FOR THE
MEN.

EXPLAIN
WHY YOU BROUGHT
EXTRA WEIGHT ONTO A
LAREFULLY BALANCED
GRAVITY DRIVE
SHIP--



IT'S NOT HIS FAULT--HE DID IT FOR ME--

OH, I UNDERSTAND NOW!

IT'S NOT HIS FAULT! YOU FORCED HIM TO STOW YOU ABOARD!

FORCED HIM TO JEOPARDIZE THE MISSION!



LEAVE HER OUT OF IT. IT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY. AND THE GRAVITY BALANCE IS NOMINAL.

I DUMPED 104 POUNDS OF THAT RASPBERRY-FLAVORED SHIT FROM THE SHIP'S STORES JUST BEFORE WE TOOK OFF.

SHUT UP, BUELLER.

I LIKED THAT RASPBERRY-FLAVORED SHIT.



I SHOULD LOCK YOUR ASS UP AND KEEP YOU THERE UNTIL THE COURT MARTIAL.

I'M SURE THE MILITARY COURT WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HEARING HOW A TOP-SECRET, MILITARY VESSEL LEFT BASE...

...WITHOUT A THOROUGH INSPECTION BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER. SIR.

BUT THE MISSION COMES AHEAD OF MY PERSONAL DESIRES. OKAY--

THE GIRL IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, WILKS. WE'LL SETTLE THE REST WHEN WE RETURN TO EARTH.

IF WE RETURN TO EARTH.





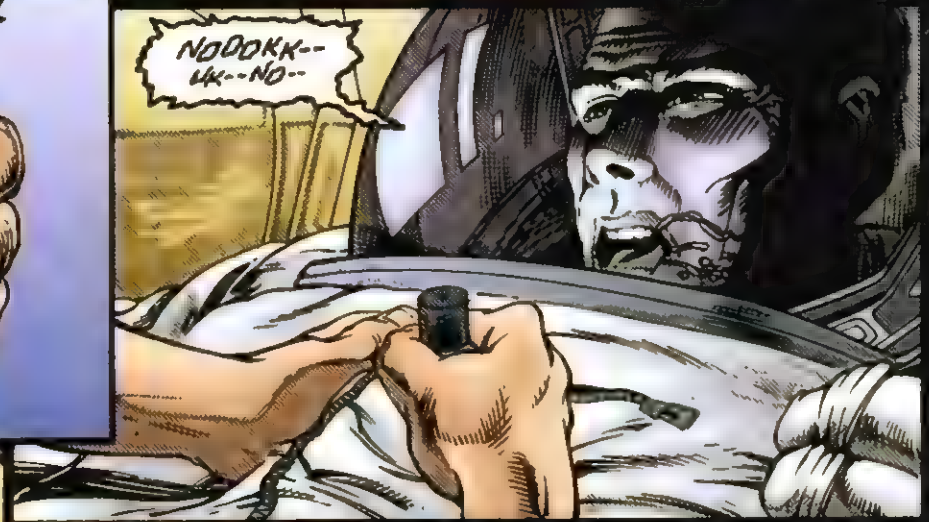


WHAT TH--

SOMEBODY'S OPENING THE #4 AIRLOCK--!



CLICK

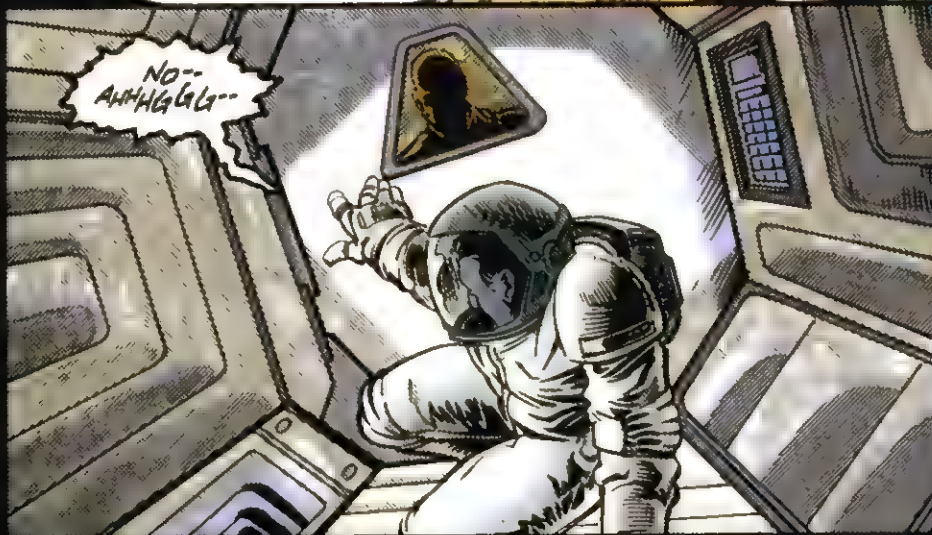


NODDKK--
LK--NO--



WHO THE HELL'S DOWN THERE?

THE AREA SHOULD BE CLEAR. CHRIST, WE'RE A COUPLE OF HOURS AWAY FROM GRAVITY BURN.



NO--
AHHHGGG--



EXTERIOR AIRLOCK

OPEN



THE PAIN--LIKE A SCREAM INSIDE ME-- OH, GOD--

I WANT TO LIVE--!

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, HOLD HIM DOWN!

I'M TRYING! WE NEED SOME TRANKS IN HERE, NOW!

I WANT TO LIVE!

AGGGGHHH!

UHH--!

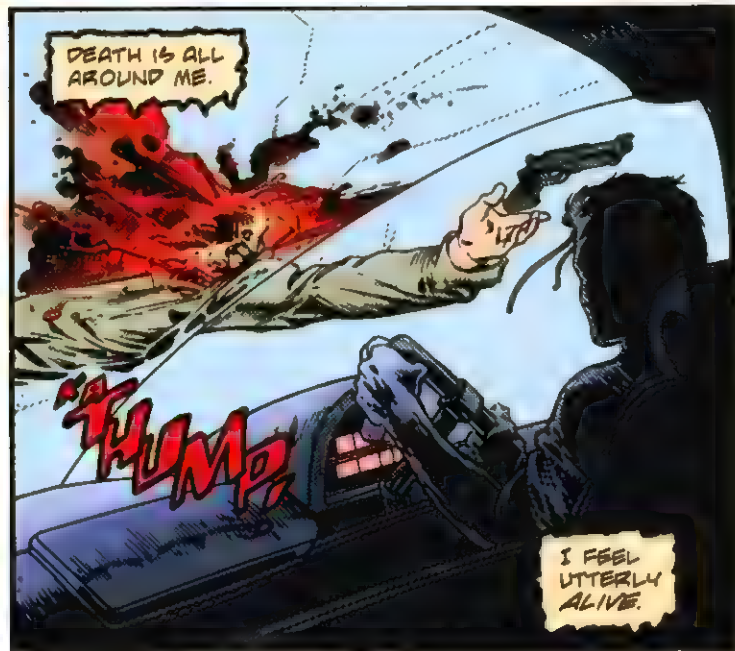
BRRRRAA!

IT'S THE SUBJECT--HE'S BROKEN AWAY AND--

AUGHH!

BRRRRAA!

SCRAASH!



THE EXPRESSWAY CUTS DIRECTLY
THROUGH THE CITY. I AM THINKING
OF MY WIFE.

THEY TRY TO
STOP ME, BUT
IT ISN'T
POSSIBLE.

BAW WHAM!

THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND.
THIS IS MY TIME. I
CANNOT BE DENIED.

I SEE ORANGE FLAMES.
THERE IS A BURST OF
HEAT. I WANT THEM
TO SUFFER.



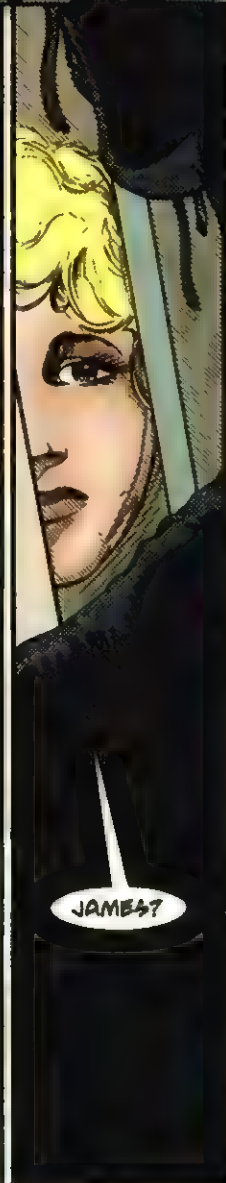
THE BUILDING IS AN OLD FRIEND. REAL FLOWERS OUT FRONT. THEY SMELL LIKE EXPENSIVE PERFUME.



I ENTER THE ELEVATOR. THE BUTTONS ARE SMOOTH, COOL PLASTIC. THE BURNISHED METAL PLATE GLOWS IN THE DIM GREEN LIGHT.



SO CLOSE. I ACHIEVE FOR HER TOUCH.



JAMES?



WE TOUCH. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I UNDERSTAND PERFECTION.

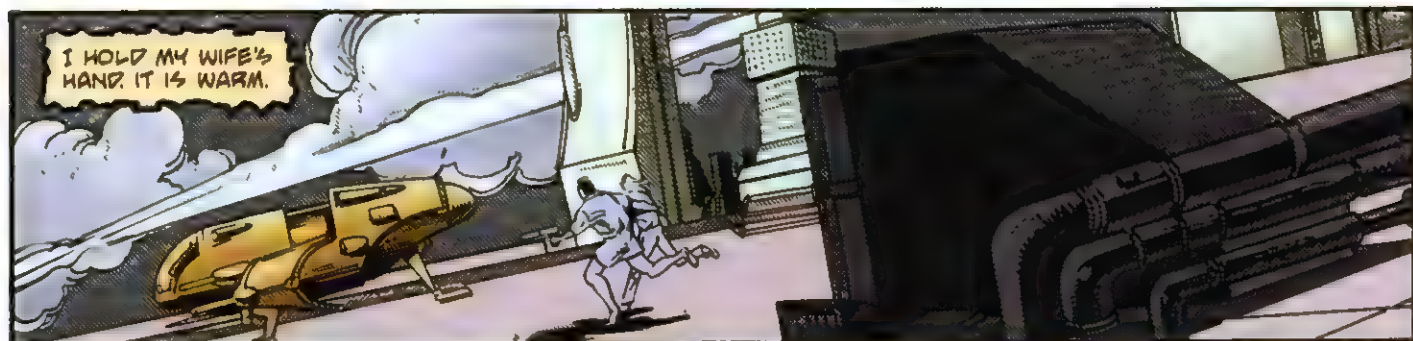


GET HIM!

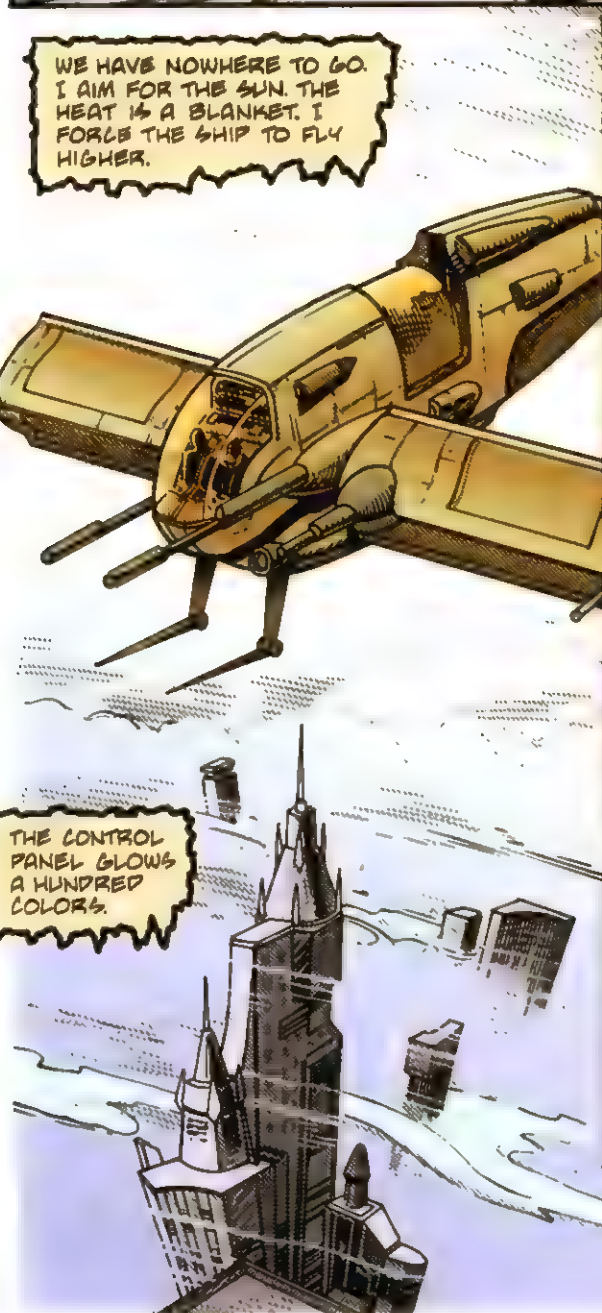


THE MOMENT
ENDS.

UGGH!



I HOLD MY WIFE'S
HAND. IT IS WARM.

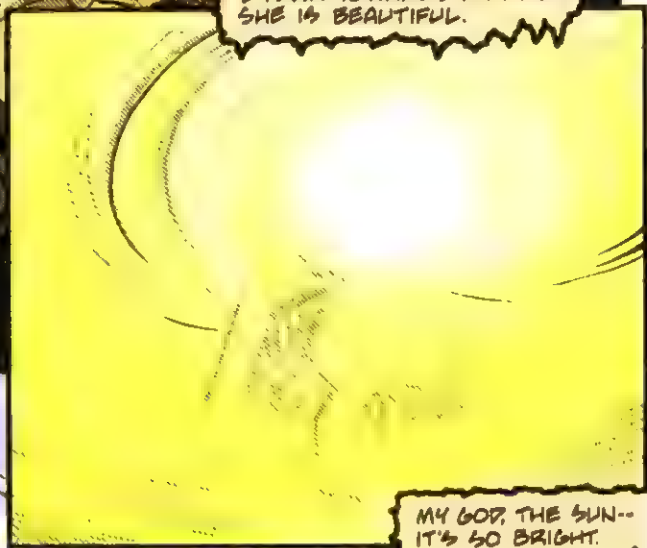


WE HAVE NOWHERE TO GO.
I AIM FOR THE SUN. THE
HEAT IS A BLANKET. I
FORCE THE SHIP TO FLY
HIGHER.

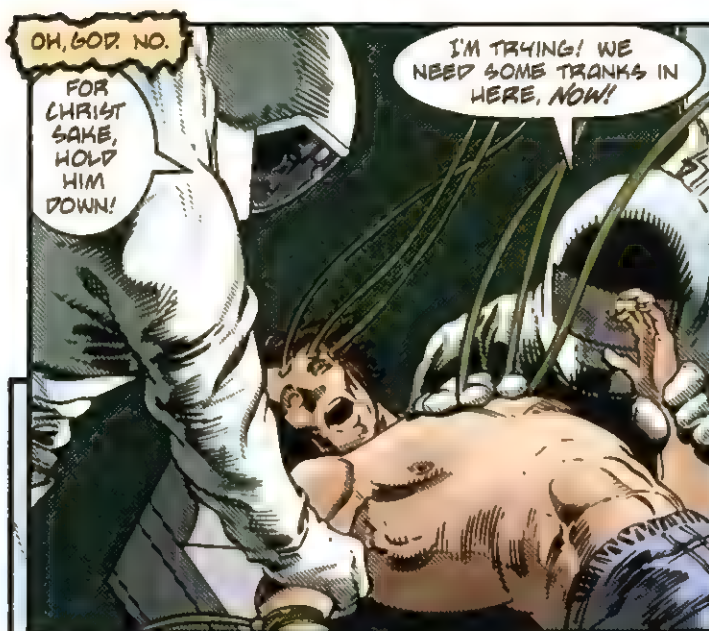


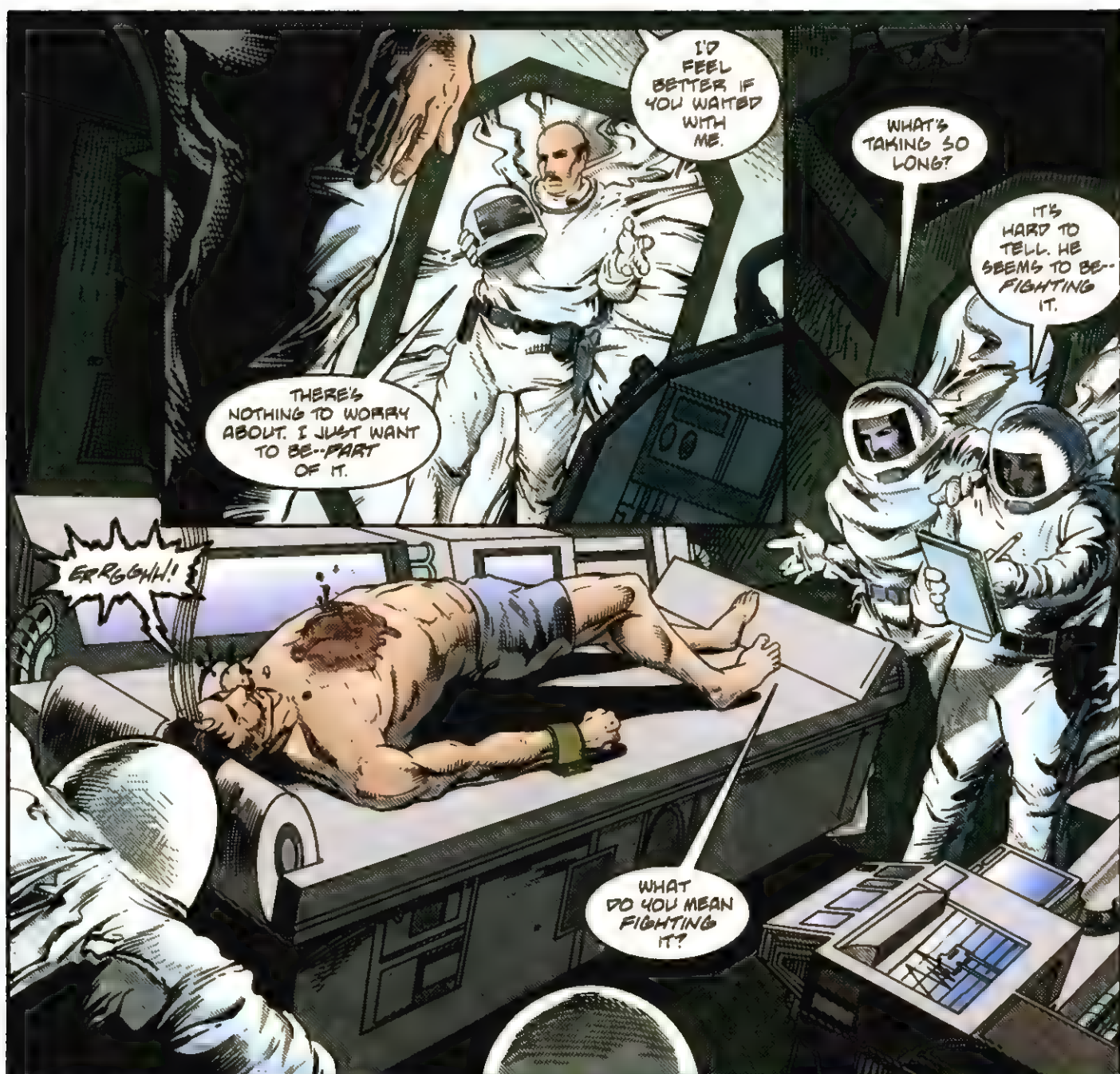
I KNOW THIS BECAUSE
I AM THERE.

I TURN TOWARDS MY WIFE.
SHE IS BEAUTIFUL.

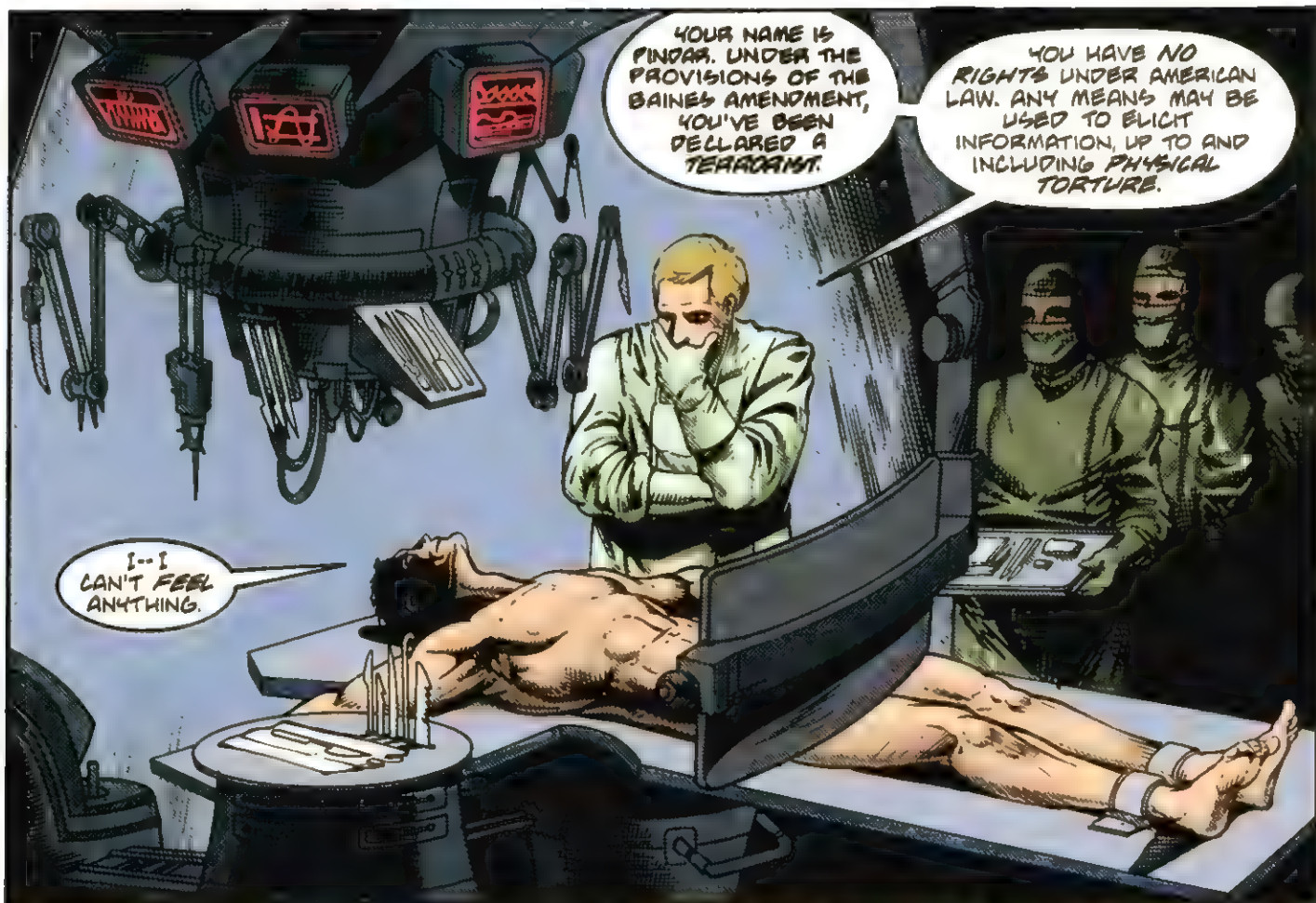


MY GOD, THE SUN--
IT'S SO BRIGHT.





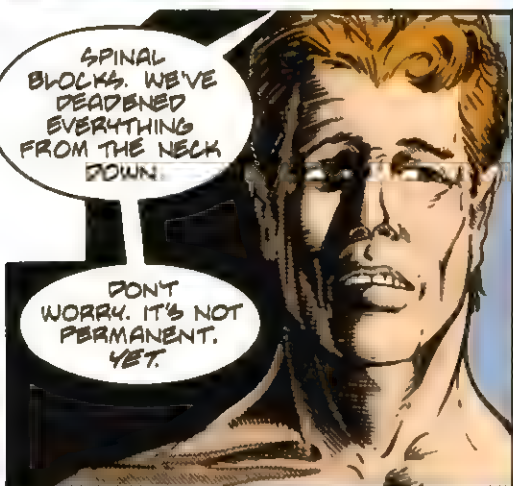




YOUR NAME IS PINDAR. UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE BAINES AMENDMENT, YOU'VE BEEN DECLARED A TERRORIST.

YOU HAVE NO RIGHTS UNDER AMERICAN LAW. ANY MEANS MAY BE USED TO ELICIT INFORMATION, UP TO AND INCLUDING PHYSICAL TORTURE.

I-- I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING.



SPINAL BLOCKS. WE'VE DEADENED EVERYTHING FROM THE NECK DOWN.

DON'T WORRY. IT'S NOT PERMANENT, YET.



LET'S MAKE IT SIMPLE. TELL US ABOUT THE CHURCH. TELL US THEIR PLANS FOR THE CREATURES.

IF THEY FIND OUT I'VE TOLD YOU--

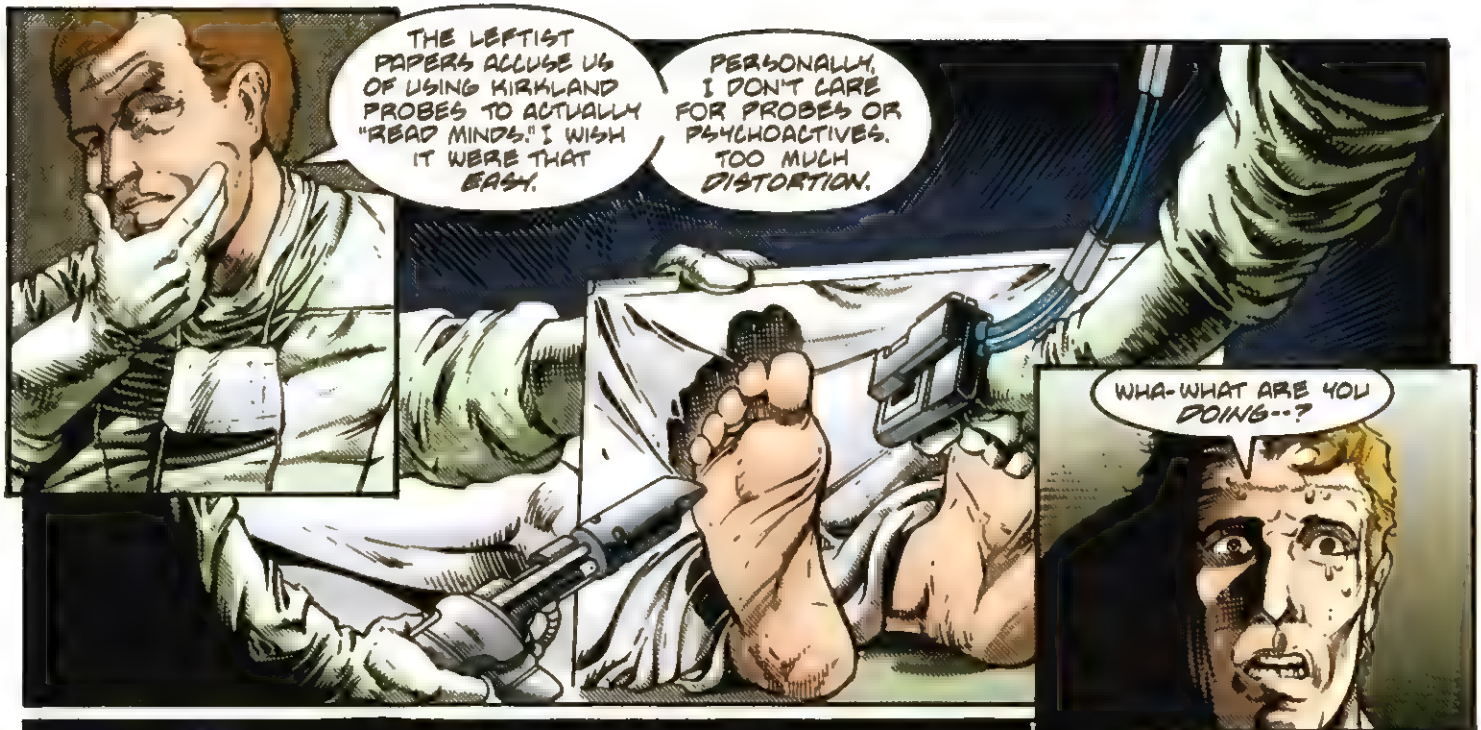
--THEY'LL MAKE ME ONE OF THEM--



I'M TOLD YOU'RE A VIDEO TECHNICIAN-- GOOD WITH YOUR HANDS. THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO START WITH YOUR LEGS.

WE USED TO DO THIS WITHOUT ANESTHESIA...

...BUT THERE WERE TERRIBLE COMPLICATIONS FROM THE SHOCK.



THE LEFTIST PAPERS ACCUSE US OF USING KIRKLAND PROBES TO ACTUALLY "READ MINDS." I WISH IT WERE THAT EASY.

PERSONALLY, I DON'T CARE FOR PROBES OR PSYCHOACTIVES. TOO MUCH DISTORTION.



WHA-WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?



IT'S WHAT YOU'RE DOING. TELL US WHAT YOU SAW--WHO WAS INVOLVED--

--AND THEN WE WON'T HAVE TO HURT YOU.

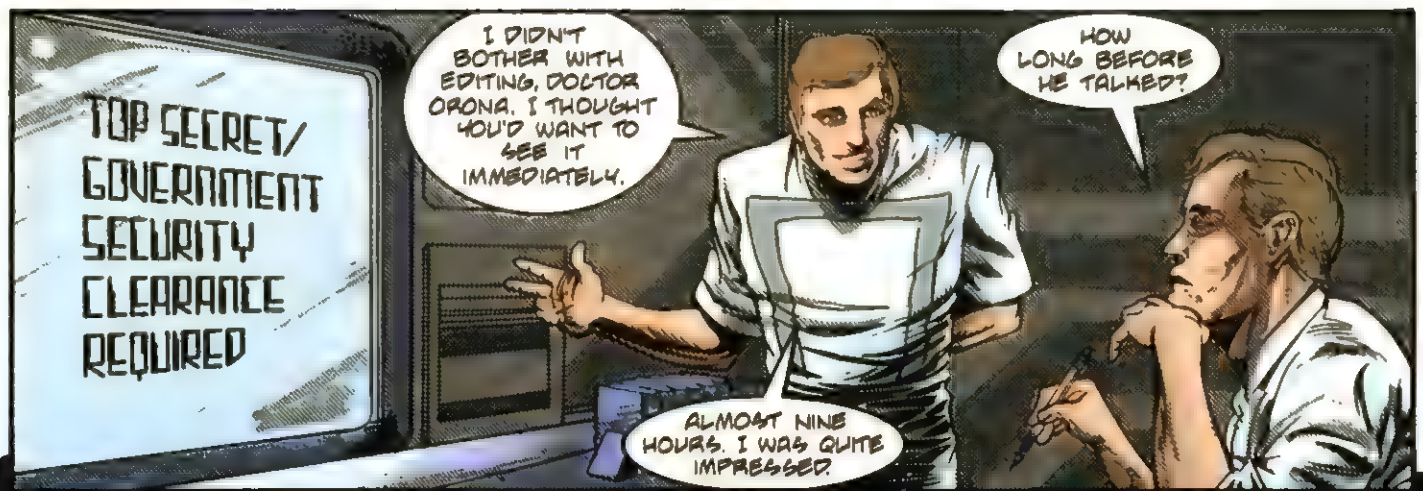
LOOK IN THE MIRROR. YOU WON'T ACTUALLY FEEL ANYTHING UNTIL WE STOP THE SPINAL-- AND THEN YOU'LL WARM UP SLOWLY--



WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME--?!



AFTER THAT, IF YOU'RE STILL NOT COOPERATIVE, WE'LL FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO PLAY WITH.



I DIDN'T BOTHER WITH EDITING, DOCTOR ORONA. I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO SEE IT IMMEDIATELY.

HOW LONG BEFORE HE TALKED?

ALMOST NINE HOURS. I WAS QUITE IMPRESSED.

"KAK KAK!"-- I CONFESS TO ALL MY CRIMES. I AM GUILTY. WHAT'S IT MATTER?

I'VE SEEN THE INCUBATION. I'VE SEEN SALVAJE'S GOD. YOU CAN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND ITS POWER.

IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR YOU IF I WERE PART OF SALVAJE'S CONSPIRACY. AT LEAST THEN YOU'D HAVE A REASON--SOMEONE TO BLAME.

PINDAR--WE JUST GOT A CORPORATE ON THE WORKLINK. ARE YOU AVAILABLE?

CORPORATE SCALE? I'LL MAKE TIME.

IT'S THE SHEER COINCIDENCE OF IT THAT TERRIFIES YOU.

THE REAL WORLD'S LIKE THAT. RANDOM. CHAOTIC. CASUAL.

PINDAR, VIDEOLINK, WE HAD A CALL ABOUT SOME CRYSTAL SWITCHING PROBLEMS?

OH, YEAH. JUST A MINUTE.

I REMEMBER THINKING-- JUST ANOTHER JOB.

THE REGULAR TECH'S OUT SICK-- ONE OF THOSE MUTATED FLU VIRUSES--

YOU DO MUCH CRYSTAL WORK?

NOT RECENTLY. CORPORATE DESIGNATES HAVE A LOCK ON THE BEST JOBS.

WHEN YOU'RE FREELANCE, IT'S ALMOST ALL PRIVATE OR MILITARY.

VIDEOLINK'S HERE. SHOULD I SEND HIM DOWN?

ROUTINE.

SWITCHER'S
IN THE BACK
ANY QUESTIONS--
BEEP ME--

OTHERWISE,
I'LL CHECK BACK
IN A HALF HOUR
OR SO--

THANKS

ONE OF THE LOGIC
CHIPS HAD
CRUNCHED I
HAD IT OUT IN
UNDER A
MINUTE.

THAT'S WHEN I SAW THEM.
CHEAP LEAD SHUNTS, HAND
SOLDERED INTO THE OPTICS
LINE. ABOUT AS SOPHISTI-
CATED AS AN OLD STYLE
FUSE.

DON'T KNOW WHY I
BURNED THEM.
CURIOSITY, MAYBE
THE CHALLENGE.

I WAS--GOOD WITH MY HANDS.

SECURITY TYPES LIKE THEM
BECAUSE THEY'RE PHYSICAL
AND TEMPORARY. OF COURSE,
THAT MAKES THEM EASY TO
CIRCUMVENT.

MY
GOD.

THEY'RE
REAL.



HELLO AGAIN.
IT'S OSTROW. JUST
CHECKING IN.

THE OTHERS
HAVE FORGOTTEN
YOUR SACRIFICE,
BUT I REMEMBER.
I'LL ALWAYS
REMEMBER.



WE
CAPTURED
IT WHILE IT
FED ON
YOU--

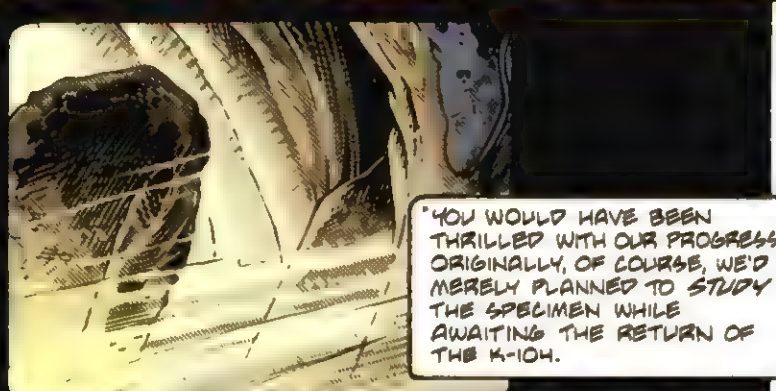


--IT SEEMED TO NEED THAT
PRIMITIVE ANIMAL KINSHIP.
WHILE IT ACCLIMATED TO THE
ARTIFICIAL ENVIRONMENT, YOU
WERE ITS HOME.

"YOU GAVE IT YOUR BODY--
YOUR LIFE--"



AT
LEAST
YOU DIDN'T
DIE IN
VAIN.

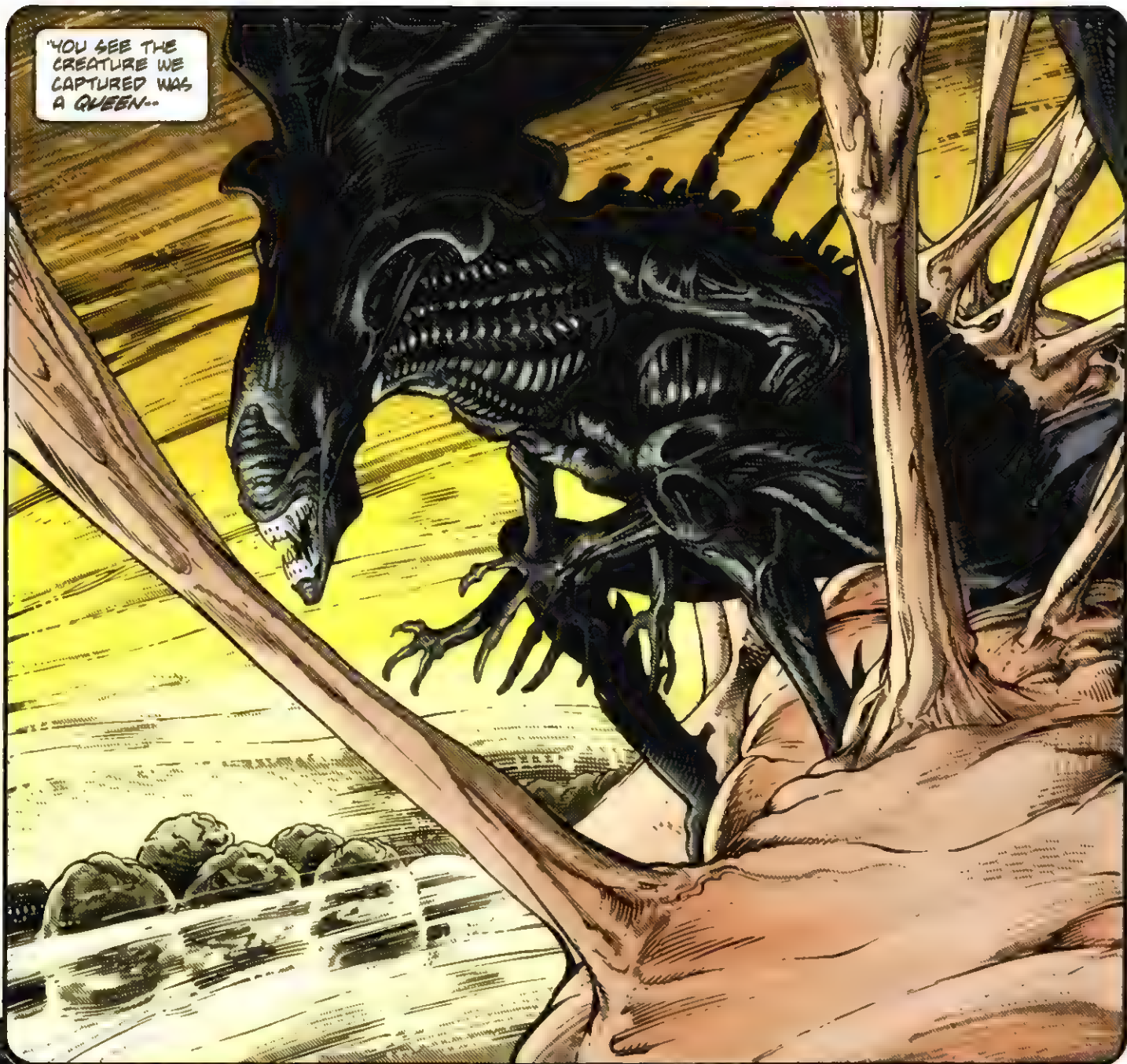


"YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN
THRILLED WITH OUR PROGRESS.
ORIGINALLY, OF COURSE, WE'D
MERELY PLANNED TO STUDY
THE SPECIMEN WHILE
AWAITING THE RETURN OF
THE K-104.



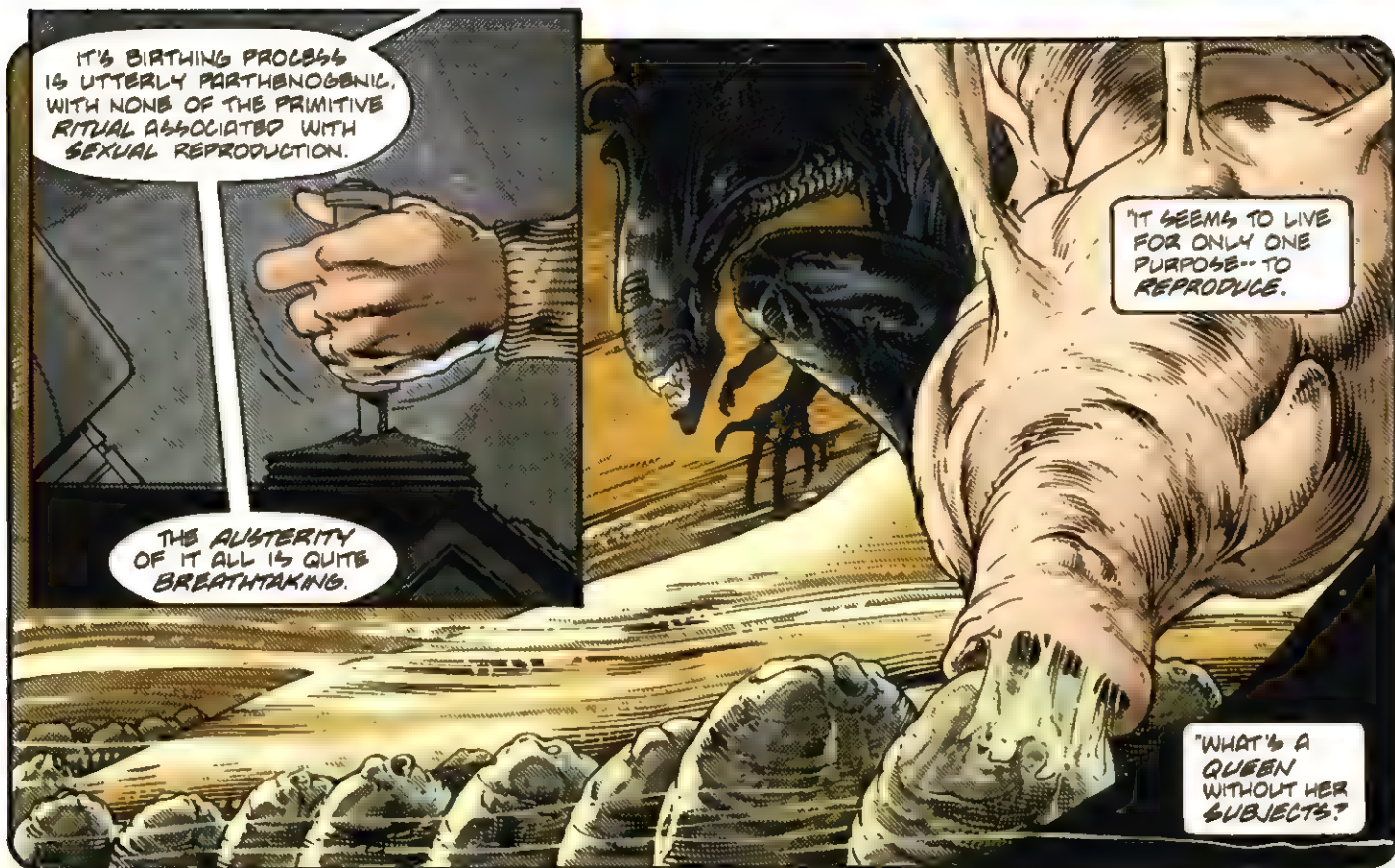
"FOR ONCE, WE HAD
A BIT OF LUCK."

"YOU SEE THE
CREATURE WE
CAPTURED WAS
A QUEEN--



"--AND THAT
CHANGED
THINGS."



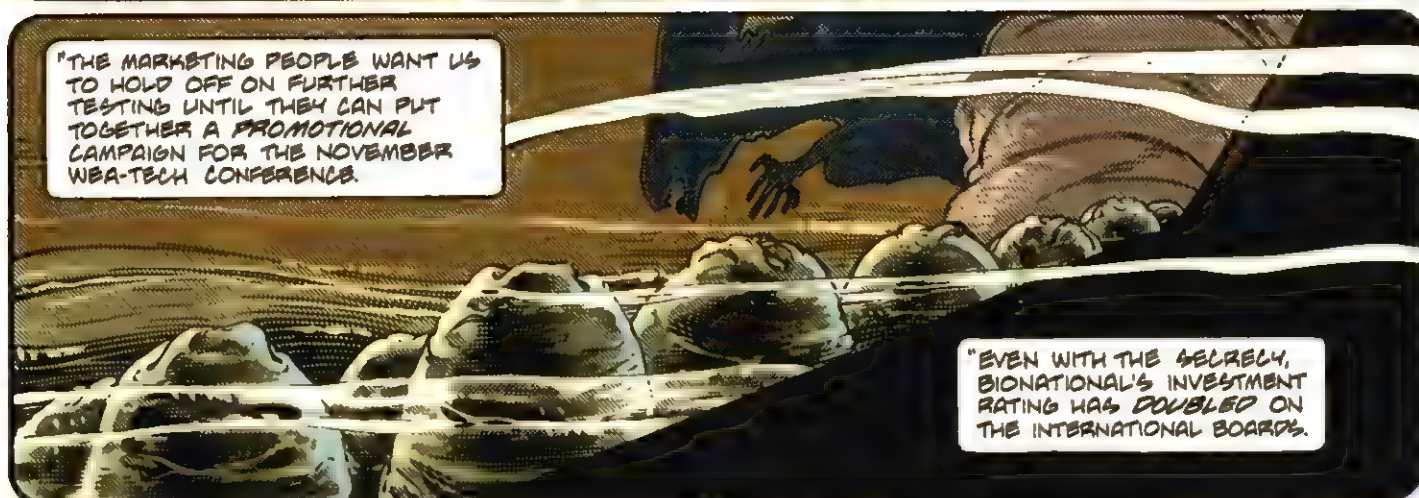


IT'S BIRTHING PROCESS IS UTTERLY PARTHENOGENIC, WITH NONE OF THE PRIMITIVE RITUAL ASSOCIATED WITH SEXUAL REPRODUCTION.

THE AUSTERITY OF IT ALL IS QUITE BREATHTAKING.

"IT SEEMS TO LIVE FOR ONLY ONE PURPOSE-- TO REPRODUCE."

"WHAT'S A QUEEN WITHOUT HER SUBJECTS?"



"THE MARKETING PEOPLE WANT US TO HOLD OFF ON FURTHER TESTING UNTIL THEY CAN PUT TOGETHER A PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE NOVEMBER WEA-TECH CONFERENCE."

"EVEN WITH THE SECRECY, BIONATIONAL'S INVESTMENT RATING HAS DOUBLED ON THE INTERNATIONAL BOARDS."



"OUR ORGANIC WEAPONS PROGRAM IS GOING TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE INDUSTRY."



"I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU--"

"...FOR US."

I WAS STANDING AT ONE OF THE VIEWPORTS, STARING INTO SPACE. THE LIGHT FROM THE STARS STRETCHED AROUND THE SHIP LIKE BLOWING WHITE NEON.

I WAS TRYING TO REMEMBER MY PARENTS. ALL I COULD REMEMBER WAS THE BLOOD.

IT--IT'S AN OPTICAL ILLUSION.

WHAT?

THE STARS-- GRAVITY DRIVES SO POWERFUL WE'RE BENDING THE LIGHT. YOU GET USED TO IT. BEATS THE HELL OUT OF HIBERNATION.

THE MARINES WERE WORK OF CAPTAIN STEPHENS IN THE AFTERMATH OF PRIVATE EASLEY'S DEATH. STEPHENS INSISTED IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, CLOSING THE INVESTIGATION BEFORE IT STARTED.

I COULD UNDERSTAND THAT ATTITUDE FROM STEPHENS. BUT WHAT ABOUT WILKS'S?

HELLO AGAIN. MIND IF I SIT HERE?

NO--I MEAN, IT'S ALRIGHT.

IN THE MIST OF THIS, WHAT DID BUELLER SEE IN ME?

CORPORAL WILKS MUST THINK A LOT OF YOU TO STOW YOU ON BOARD.

STEPHENS IS GOING TO HAVE HIS ASS ONCE WE'RE BACK ON BARTH.

WILKS AND I--UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

YEAH-- I'LL BET YOU UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER REAL WELL--

KNOCK IT OFF, RAMIREZ.

COULDN'T HE FIND SOMEONE HIS OWN AGE TO--

--I SAID KNOCK IT OFF!



NO ONE HAD EVER SHOWN
INTEREST IN ME BEFORE.
AT FIRST IT DIDN'T MAKE
ANY SENSE.

THIS IS
WHERE WE STOW
THE BLASTERS AND
THE REST OF THE
PORTABLE GEAR.
HERE, LET
ME--



DON'T--
TOUCH ME.

IT'S
OKAY. MY
FAULT.

I-I'M
SORRY. I'M
JUST--



EVER
BEEN AROUND
THESE THINGS
BEFORE?

ONCE.
WHEN I WAS
LITTLE.

REALLY. YOU
MUST HAVE
RUN WITH
A ROUGH
CROWD.



THEN I REALIZED--HE WAS
LIKE ME. HE KNEW HOW IT
FELT TO BE ALONE.

WHAT MADE
YOU JOIN THE MARINES?
DON'T YOU MISS YOUR
FAMILY?



THE
MARINES
ARE MY
FAMILY.

LISTEN,
ABOUT
CORPORAL
WILKS.

IF THERE
IS SOMETHING
BETWEEN--



SWHH.

TELL
ME WHY YOU HIT
RAMIREZ BACK IN THE
COMMISSARY.



RAMIREZ'S GOT
A BIG MOUTH. HE HAD
NO RIGHT TO SAY
WHAT HE DID.

AND
I WAS
AFRAID IT
MIGHT BE
TRUE.

WILKS GAVE ME A SCHEDULE OF TOKEN ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES TO KEEP ME OCCUPIED DURING THE VOYAGE.

HATRED OF THE ALIENS BURNED INSIDE HIM LIKE AN OPEN FLAME. IT WAS ALL THAT SUSTAINED HIM.

PRIVATE BUELLER! DO YOU HAVE BUSINESS AT THIS STATION?

HE'D LOST ALL SENSE OF COMPASSION. HE SHRUGGED OFF BASLEY'S DEATH AS IF IT WERE TRIVIAL--AN ANNOYANCE.

I SHARED HIS HATRED OF THE ALIENS, BUT SUDDENLY OUR BITTER QUEST SEEMED EMPTY--ALMOST UGLY.

WILKS-- HE WAS ONLY--

GET BACK WITH THE OTHERS, SOLDIER! NOW.

I SAW WHAT HE WAS DOING! IT'S GOING TO STOP, EVEN IF I HAVE TO CONFINED BOTH OF YOU TO YOUR QUARTERS.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? BUELLER WAS--

MY GOD, YOU'RE JEALOUS.

I'M NOT A CHILD ANYMORE. BUELLER'S MY FRIEND--

--MAYBE MY ONLY FRIEND. I WON'T LET YOU RUIN THAT.

WE FOUND AN UNUSED STORAGE UNIT BEHIND THE ENGINE COMPARTMENT AND MET AS OFTEN AS WE COULD. IT WAS ALL SO NEW TO ME.

--SOMETIMES I FEEL SO FRIGHTENED-- LIKE I'M STILL EIGHT YEARS OLD--

THAT'S NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF.

I'M FRIGHTENED OF THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT YOU.

I WONDER HOW THAT WILL CHANGE WHEN WE REACH THE HOMEWORLD.

MAYBE WILKS HAD BEEN HATING SO LONG--

MAYBE I HAD BEEN LOCKED AWAY SO LONG I'D NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO TRY.

--WE'D FORGOTTEN WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO CARE ABOUT SOMEONE.

I--I'VE NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE.

NEITHER HAVE I.

WE STOOD AT THE VIEWPORT, STARING INTO SPACE.

THE ALIENS DESTROYED MY LIFE ONCE. I COULDN'T STOP THEM THEN-- BUT I COULD STOP IT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.

THE LIGHT FROM THE STARS STRETCHED AROUND THE SHIP LIKE BANDS OF GLOWING WHITE NEON.

'KAK KAK'--THE
BIONATIONAL
PEOPLE NEVER
SUSPECTED. I
REPLACED THE
SHUNTS--
PRETENDED
NOTHING HAD
HAPPENED--

--ALL THE TIME
KNOWING THAT
I HAD TO FIND
SALVAJE.

PINDAR--GOT
ANOTHER CALL FOR
YOU. MAIN FEED'S
GONE DOWN
AT THE--

GET
SOMEBODY
ELSE.

OPEN UP,
YOU CRAZY
BASTARD!
LET ME
IN--!

POOM POOM
POOM

WELCOME.
I AM DIDI.
WE ARE--
I
KNOW WHO
YOU ARE.

SALVAJE--
DAMN YOU, I'VE
SEEN IT-- IT'S
REAL!

SALVAJE'S VISION HAD TAPPED INTO SOMETHING PRIMAL,
UNCONTROLLABLE. AS HIS MESSAGE SPREAD, THE
DEVOTED SOUGHT HIM OUT--PROVIDED FOR HIM.

WELCOME
BROTHER. PLEASE
JOIN US IN
OUR--

WHERE
THE HELL IS
HE?

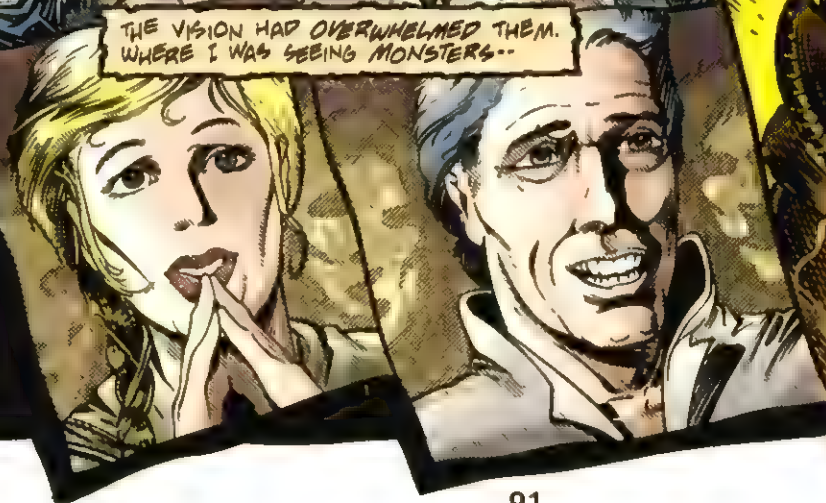


THERE WAS NO SURPRISE. IT WAS AS IF THEY WERE EXPECTING ME.

IT TOOK ME A MOMENT TO TRULY UNDERSTAND.



THE VISION HAD OVERWHELMED THEM. WHERE I WAS SEEING MONSTERS...



--THEY WERE SEEING SALVATION.



EVERYTHING QUIET?

GOT A GLITCH IN ONE OF THE INFRA-REDS, BUT MAINTENANCE SAID THEY'D--

WAIT A MINUTE.

MOTION SENSORS JUST PICKED HER UP. SHOULD I ACTIVATE THE GRID?

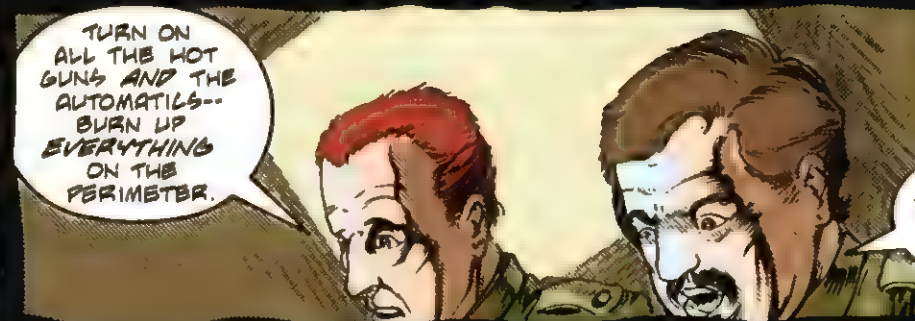
MAYBE ONE OF THE EXECUTIVES FORGOT TO PUNCH HER IN. TRY A LONG RANGE RETINAL AND A PHOTO I.D. SEARCH.

BN
INTERNATIONAL



I'M NOT GETTING ANYTHING.

--OH, YES. I'M PICKING UP MOVEMENT ALL OVER THE SITE.



TURN ON ALL THE HOT GUNS AND THE AUTOMATICS-- BURN UP EVERYTHING ON THE PERIMETER.

WHAT'S THAT SHE'S WEARING ON HER--



KA-WHAM!

SALVAJE'S CONGREGATION
POURED INTO THE
BIONATIONAL COMPLEX.
I WAS STUNNED BY
THEIR POWER.

I WANT
EVERYBODY
ON HARD FIRE
STANDBY, LOCKED
AND LOADED.
NOBODY
GETS IN.

WHO
IN THE
HELL
COULD
HAVE..

GUNS DIDN'T FRIGHTEN THEM. DEATH
DIDN'T FRIGHTEN THEM. NOTHING
MATTERED BUT THE CAUSE.

IT WASN'T THAT THEY WERENT FEELING
THE PAIN. THEY JUST DIDN'T CARE.

KEEP
FIRING! KEEP
FIRING!

BRRA!

BRRA!

WE NEED
MORE MEN..
WE CAN'T..

YAAHHGGG+!

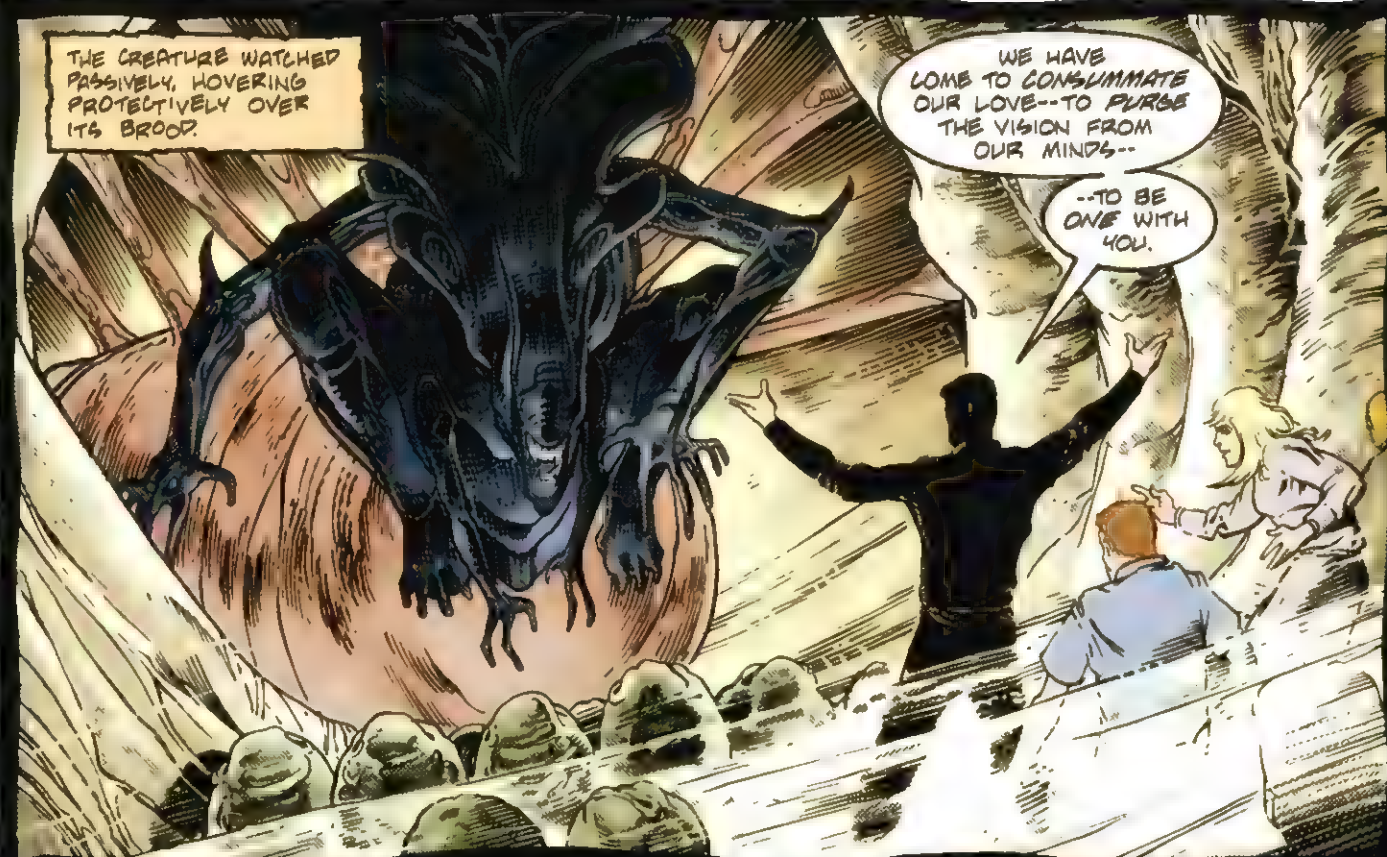
SALVAJE WANTED ME TO SEE EVERYTHING. EVEN
IN THE MIDST OF THE BLOOD AND DEATH, HE
FELT IT IMPORTANT THAT I BELIEVE.

DANGER
BIOLOGICAL
EXPERIMENT

THE CREATURE WATCHED PASSIVELY, HOVERING PROTECTIVELY OVER ITS BROOD.

WE HAVE COME TO CONSUMMATE OUR LOVE--TO PURGE THE VISION FROM OUR MINDS--

--TO BE ONE WITH YOU.



TAKE ME. TAKE ME. TA--



IT BURST OUT IN A GLISTENING BLUR, VISCIOUS TENDRILS OF FLUID FLUTTERING BEHIND IT LIKE SOME OBSCENE AFTERBIRTH.



I COULD SEE HIS MOUTH TWISTING IN PAIN AS THE CREATURE ATTACHED ITSELF--

--AND HE STARTED TO SCREAM.



FOR THE FIRST TIME, GALVANE UNDERSTOOD THE TRUE MEANING OF SACRIFICE.



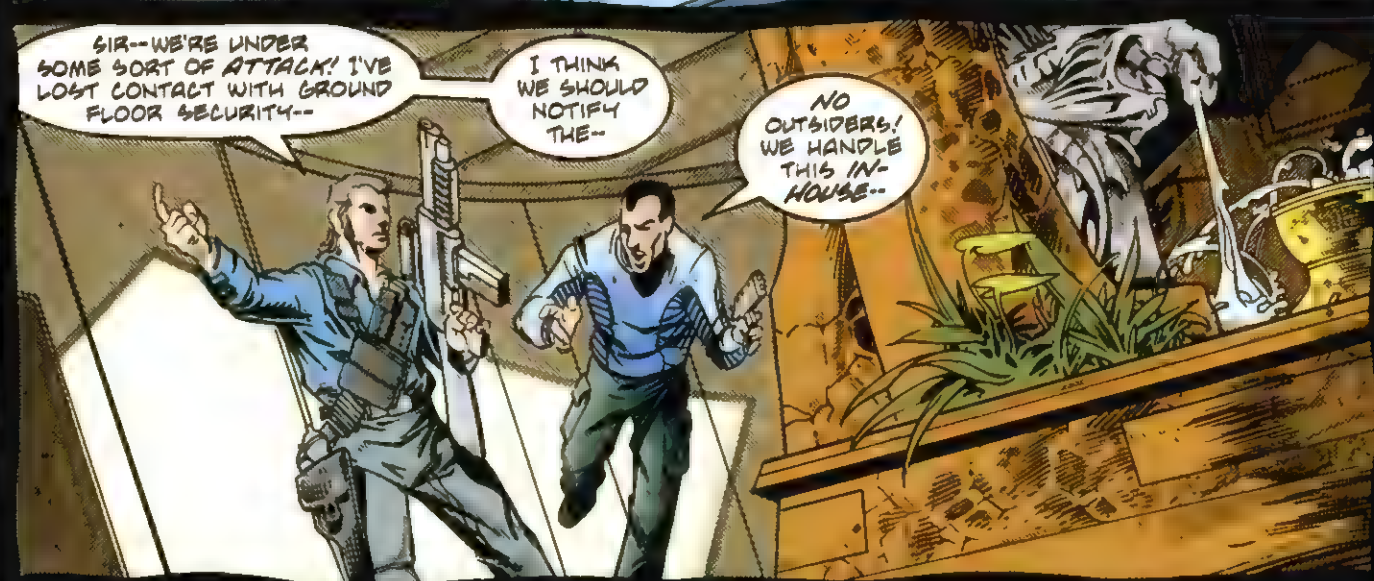


WHA--
MY GOD.
THEY'RE TAKING
HER.



AGGH!
PLEASE--
TAKE ME--
PLEASE--!

UKGH--!
THEY'RE
TRYING TO
DESTROY
HER.



SIR--WE'RE UNDER
SOME SORT OF ATTACK! I'VE
LOST CONTACT WITH GROUND
FLOOR SECURITY--

I THINK
WE SHOULD
NOTIFY
THE--

NO
OUTSIDERS!
WE HANDLE
THIS IN-
HOUSE--



SALVAGE'S APOLYTES DRAGGED THEIR INFECTED
BRETHREN OUTSIDE, MAKING ROOM FOR THE
OTHERS. I SAW DOZENS TAKE THE SPORS.

THEY WERE ALL HER CHILDREN NOW.



KILLERS!
MURDERERS!



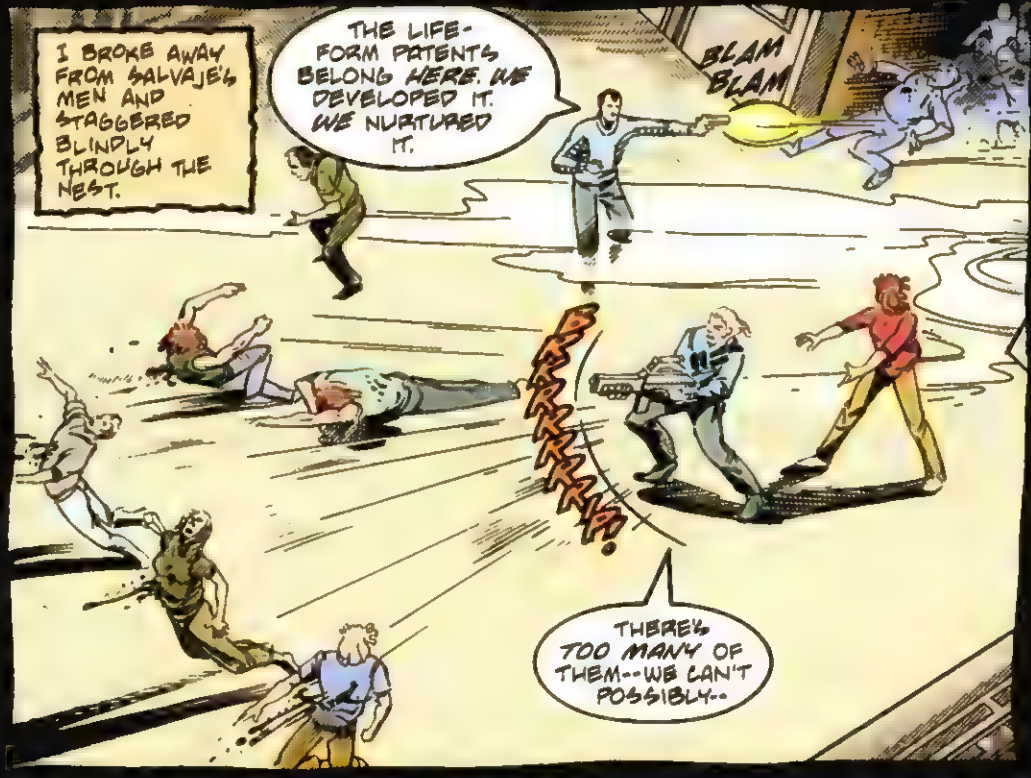
THE
QUEEN'S
MINE!

BLAM
BLAM



I HEARD GUNFIRE
OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER.
SUDDENLY, THE ALIEN
SCREAMED.

IT WAS THE CRY OF A MOTHER
AT THE DEATH OF HER CHILD.



I BROKE AWAY
FROM SALVAJE'S
MEN AND
STAGGERED
BLINDLY
THROUGH THE
NEST.

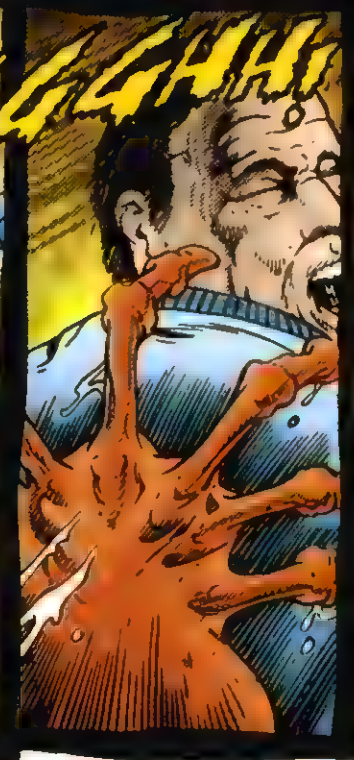
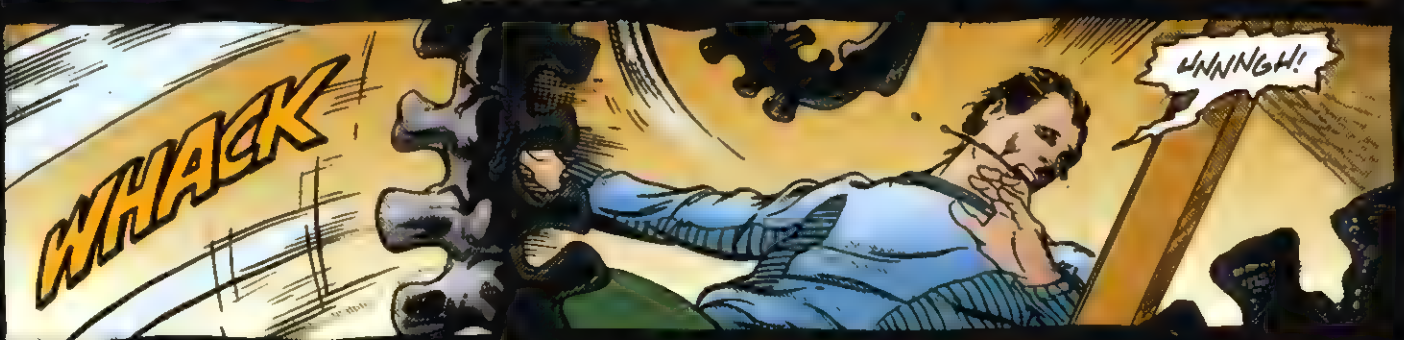
THE LIFE-
FORM PATENTS
BELONG HERE. WE
DEVELOPED IT.
WE NURTURED
IT.

BLAM
BLAM

THERE'S
TOO MANY OF
THEM--WE CAN'T
POSSIBLY--



--MOTHER
OF--



KOFF KOFF--I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH AFTER THAT. SECURITY POLICE QUARANTINED THE BUILDING--THEY MUST HAVE FOUND ME INSIDE--

I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY-- WHY ME--?

OH MY GOD. IT MAKES SENSE NOW. SHE DID IT--THAT THING--

I'VE BEEN PART OF IT ALL ALONG. HOOKING UP SALVAJE, BURNING THE SECURITY STOPS--

KAK KAK--MAYBE IT GOES BACK EVEN FURTHER--BIRTH--SCHOOL. EVERY DECISION OF OF MY LIFE--MAYBE SHE CONTROLLED IT ALL--

IT WASN'T SALVAJE'S CONSPIRACY--IT WAS MINE. I WAS JUST ANOTHER SOLDIER-- ANOTHER SACRIFICE--

OH GOD, PLEASE-- I'M SCARED OF DYING. I WANT TO LIVE. I WANT TO--

THAT'S ENOUGH. WHAT DID YOU DO WITH HIM?

ORGAN BANK'S TAKING WHAT THEY CAN USE-- EYES, SKIN, WHAT'S LEFT OF HIS STOMACH. THEY'LL BURN THE REST.

WE'RE WASTING TIME. WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHERE THE FANATICS ARE HIDING.

ACCORDING TO BIONATIONAL DOCUMENTATION, ALIEN GESTATION TAKES ANYWHERE FROM 72 HOURS TO A WEEK OR MORE.

IF ANY OF THE NEWBORN ESCAPE--IF ANY OF THEM ARE QUEENS--

GOD HELP US ALL.

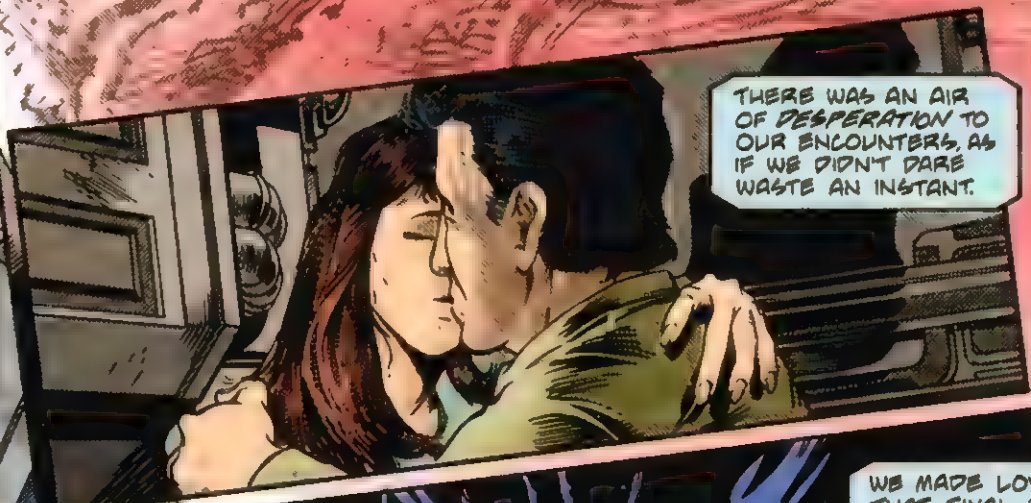
AS THE SHIP APPROACHED THE ALIEN'S HOMEWORLD, I WAS OVERWHELMED BY A HIDEOUS PREMONITION OF DEATH.



BUELLER AND I SPENT EVERY SPARE MOMENT TOGETHER. I KNEW WE SHARED MY APPREHENSIONS.



THERE WAS AN AIR OF DESPERATION TO OUR ENCOUNTERS, AS IF WE DIDN'T DARE WASTE AN INSTANT.



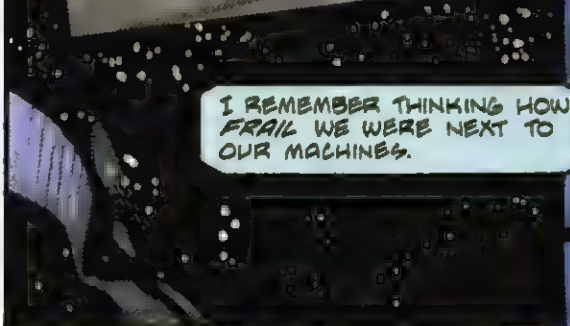
WE MADE LOVE THAT FINAL DAY, SURROUNDED BY THE BLEAK GRAY METAL OF THE SHIP'S HULL.



AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE RIM, I CRYED.



I REMEMBER THINKING HOW FRAIL WE WERE NEXT TO OUR MACHINES.





SON OF A BITCH--

CAPTAIN STEPHENS--THERE'S SOMETHING OUT THERE.



PERHAPS IT'S--PEBRIS OF SOME KIND?

NO WAY, SIR. IT'S CHANGING COURSE-- FOLLOWING US

IT'S SOME SORT OF SHIP.

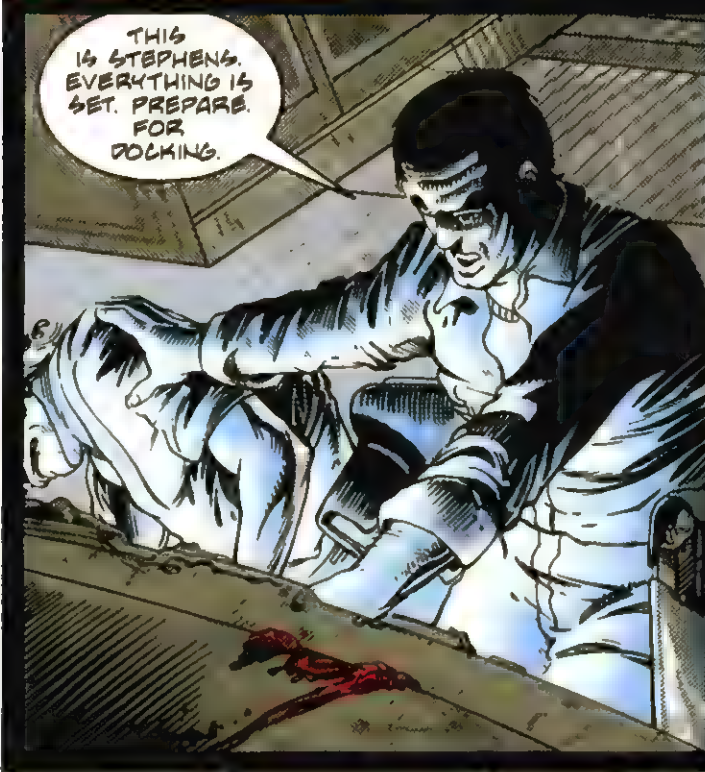


I'LL SOUND GENERAL QUAR--

BLAM



NO. NOT QUITE YET.

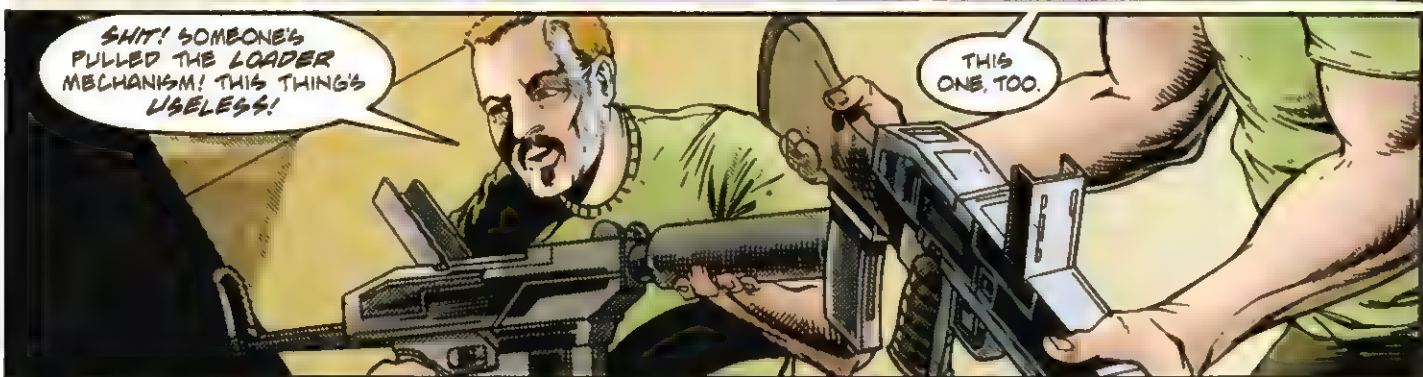
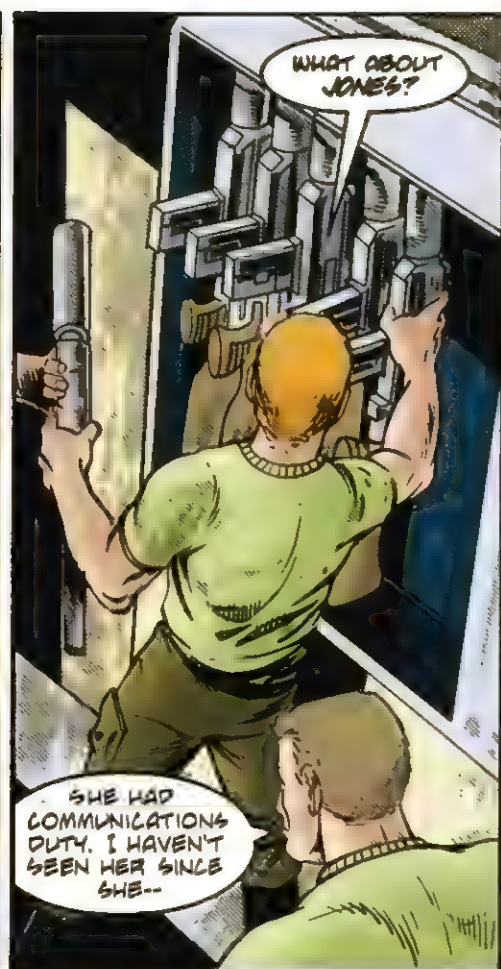


THIS IS STEPHENS. EVERYTHING IS SET. PREPARE FOR DOCKING.



MASSEY HERE. EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT..







I SUPPOSE YOU'RE GOING TO KILL THE REST OF THEM-- LIKE YOU KILLED EASLEY.

WHAT HAPPENED-- HE CATCH YOU TRANSMITTING TO THESE BASTARDS?

GET OFF IT, WILKS--

YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT THE DAMN "MARINES" ANY MORE THAN I DO. ALL YOU CARE ABOUT ARE YOUR PRECIOUS ALIENS.

THAT'S IT-- NICE AND EASY!

DOUBLE CHECK THE SHIP'S COMPLEMENT. MAKE SURE WE HAVE EVERYONE.

YOUR MARINES ARE SAFE FOR NOW. CORPORAL WILKS. WE STILL NEED AN ALIEN SPECIMEN-- AND THEY SEEM TO THRIVE ON HUMANS.

HUMAN? YOU THINK YOU CAN USE THE MARINES FOR BAIT? CHRIST, DIDN'T THEY--

THAT'S ENOUGH.

I DON'T LIKE YOU STEPHENS. I DON'T MIND GREEDY MEN--

--BUT I CAN'T COUNTENANCE TRAITORS--EVEN WHEN THEY'RE ON MY SIDE. NEVER KNOW WHEN THEY MIGHT TURN--

WAIT-- MASSEY--YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND-- YOU NEED ME--

POOM!

NOT ANYMORE.

PREPARE THE DROPSHIP FOR LANDING.

WE'RE GOING HUNTING.

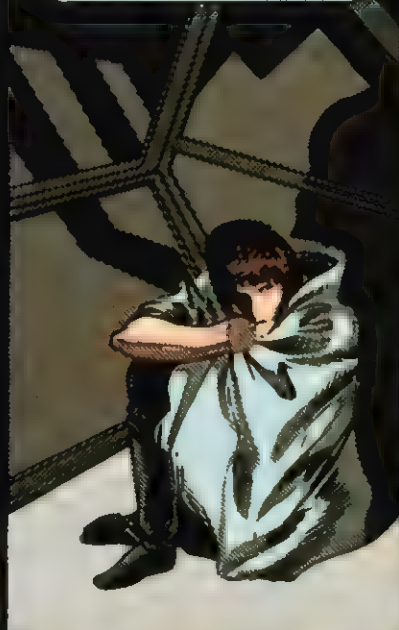
FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT
I'D FOUND LOVE. ONE
OF WILK'S GRUNTS--A
MARINE NAMED BUELLER--

WHAT IS IT ABOUT LIFE
THAT AS SOON AS YOU
FIND SOMETHING GOOD--
IT'S TAKEN AWAY FROM
YOU?

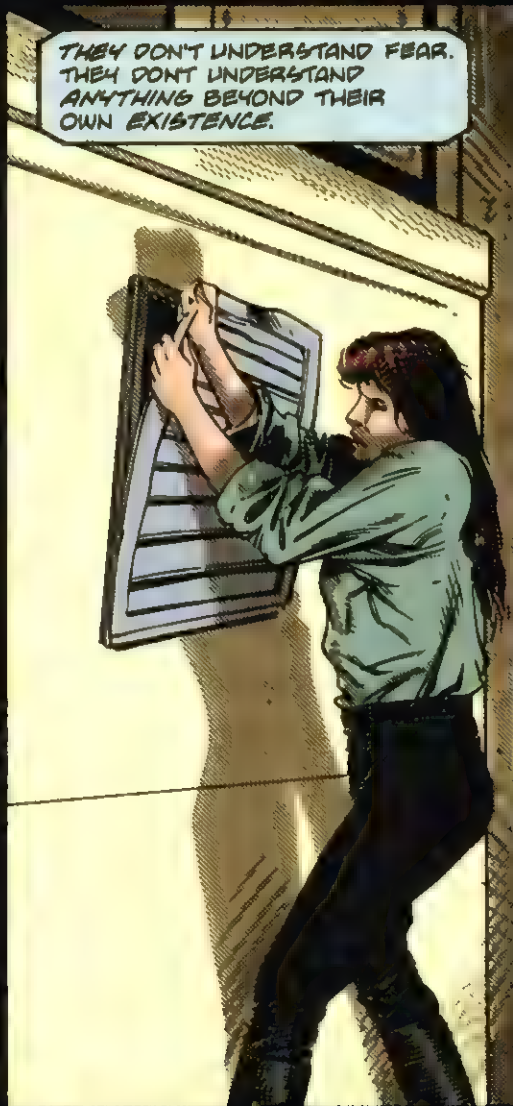
I COULD FEEL THE
PANIC RISING IN MY
CHEST. CHOKING.
CLAUSTROPHOBIC.

MY FIRST INSTINCT WAS TO
HIDE-- JUST LIKE RIM--
JUST LIKE EARTH.

THAT'S WHAT THE ENEMY
DEPENDS ON. HUMAN--
ALIEN--THEY RELY ON
THAT FEAR TO ENDURE.



THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND FEAR.
THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND
ANYTHING BEYOND THEIR
OWN EXISTENCE.



I KNEW I WOULD HAVE TO
BECOME LIKE THEM TO
SURVIVE.

IT EXPLAINED THE
RESILIENCE OF
CREATURES LIKE
THE ALIEN.

IT HAD BEEN FOUR HOURS SINCE WE'D BEEN BOARDED. WHO THE HELL WERE THEY? SOLDIERS? MERCENARIES?

THIS WAS EASIER THAN I'D HOPED. DID YOU DOUBLE-CHECK THE INBOARD ROSTER?

STEPHENS ALED EASLEY AND JONES AND DUMPED THE BODIES BEFORE WE DOCKED--

THE REST OF THE COMPLEMENT IS ACCOUNTED FOR.

IT DIDN'T MATTER. IT WOULDN'T HAVE MATTERED TO THEM.

NO WONDER STEPHENS CHEWED MY ASS OVER PACKING PLASMA RIFLES. HE WAS AFRAID WE'D USE THEM AGAINST YOU.

I STILL CAN'T FIGURE WHERE THE CORPORATION FOUND THE BALLS TO INTERCEPT A GOVERNMENT SHIP ON A CLASSIFIED MISSION--

I THINK YOU'LL FIND THE CORPORATION CAPABLE OF ALMOST ANYTHING.

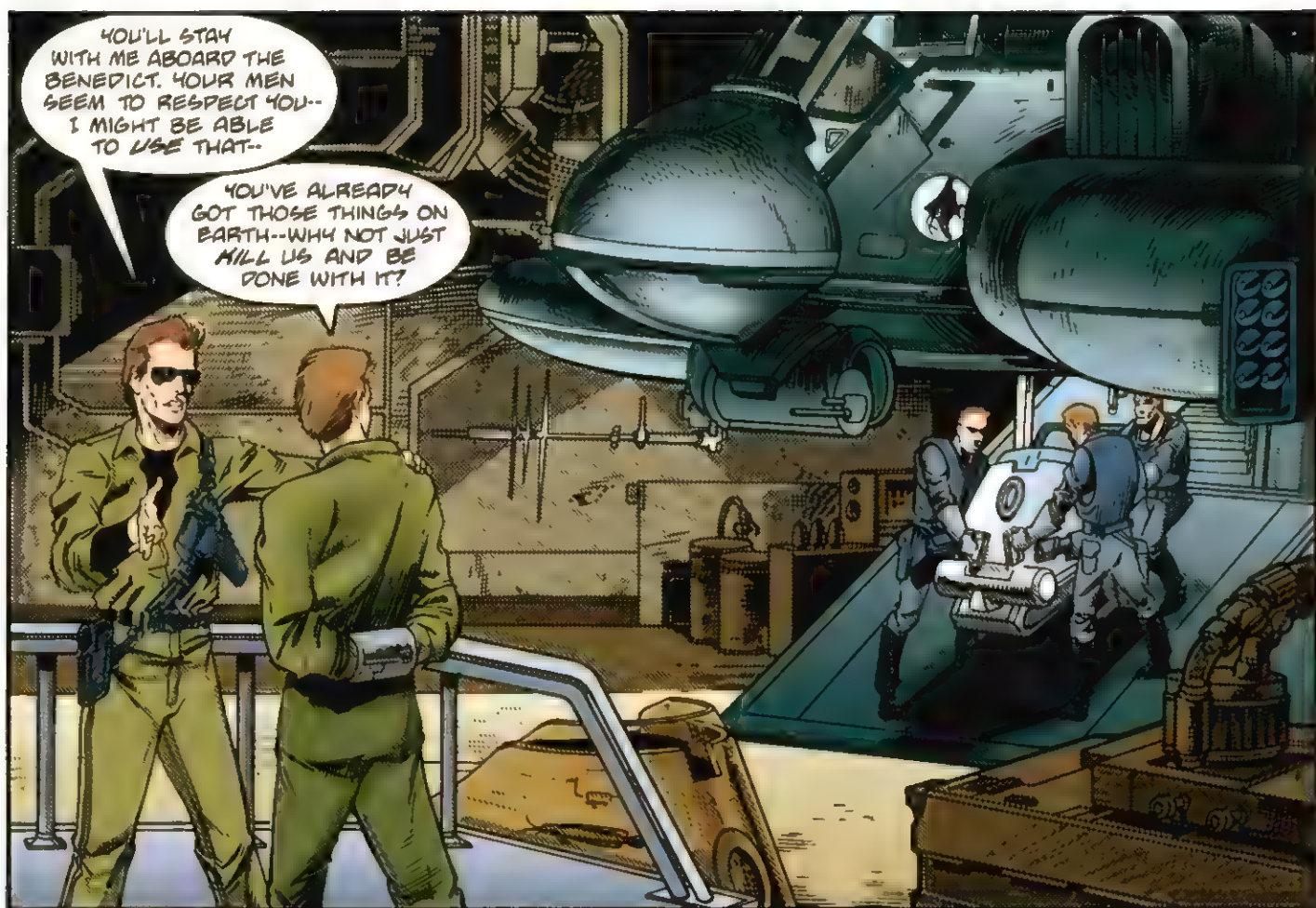
WE STILL BELIEVE IN FREE ENTERPRISE-- CAPITALISM. AND I'M AFRAID YOUR GOVERNMENT WANTS TO KEEP THE ALIEN LIFEFORM FOR ITSELF.

MY GOVERNMENT? YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE THE CORPORATION IS AN INDEPENDENT STATE--

JESUS. THOSE THINGS DESTROYED RIM. THINK WHAT THEY COULD DO ON EARTH--

I HAVE.

WE'RE BREEDING THEM.



YOU'LL STAY WITH ME ABOARD THE BENEDICT. YOUR MEN SEEM TO RESPECT YOU-- I MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE THAT--

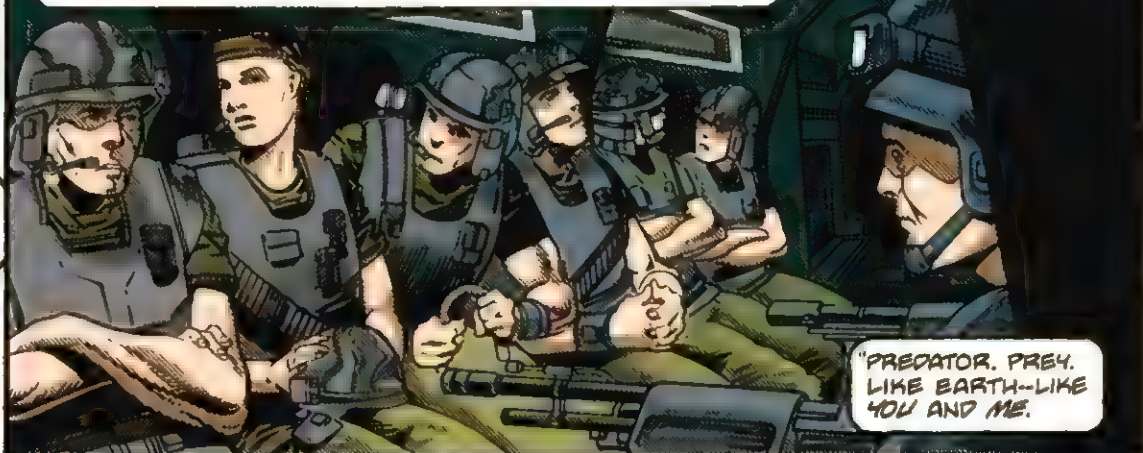
YOU'VE ALREADY GOT THOSE THINGS ON EARTH--WHY NOT JUST KILL US AND BE DONE WITH IT?

OH, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO DIE--REST ASSURED OF THAT.

BUT I'M SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE CALL OF SCIENCE.

WE'RE CHARGED WITH INVESTIGATING THE HOMEWORLD BEFORE RETURNING TO EARTH.

"NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU MIGHT FIND. IF THEIR HOMEWORLD FOLLOWS TRADITIONAL PATTERNS, THERE'S PROBABLY SOME SORT OF ECOLOGICAL BALANCE.



"PREDATOR. PREY. LIKE EARTH--LIKE YOU AND ME.

"THE ALIEN IS A REMARKABLE LIFEFORM, BUT IT MAY NOT BE THE DOMINANT SPECIES ON ITS HOMEWORLD.

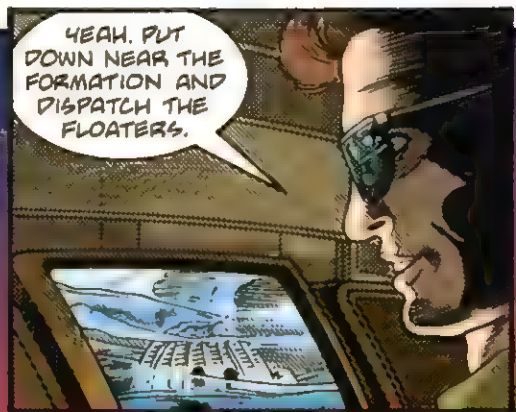
"A CORPORATION LIKE BIONATIONAL SUCCEEDS BY STAYING ONE STEP IN FRONT OF THE COMPETITION. IN FIVE YEARS THE ALIEN WILL BE OBSOLETE--PASSE. WE'LL NEED TO FIND NEWER, SUPERIOR BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS.

"WE'RE FISHING. YOUR MARINES ARE BAIT."



WE'RE PICKING UP SOME BURN ON THE OUTER HULL-- GROUND SCANNERS ARE STARTING TO CLEAR--

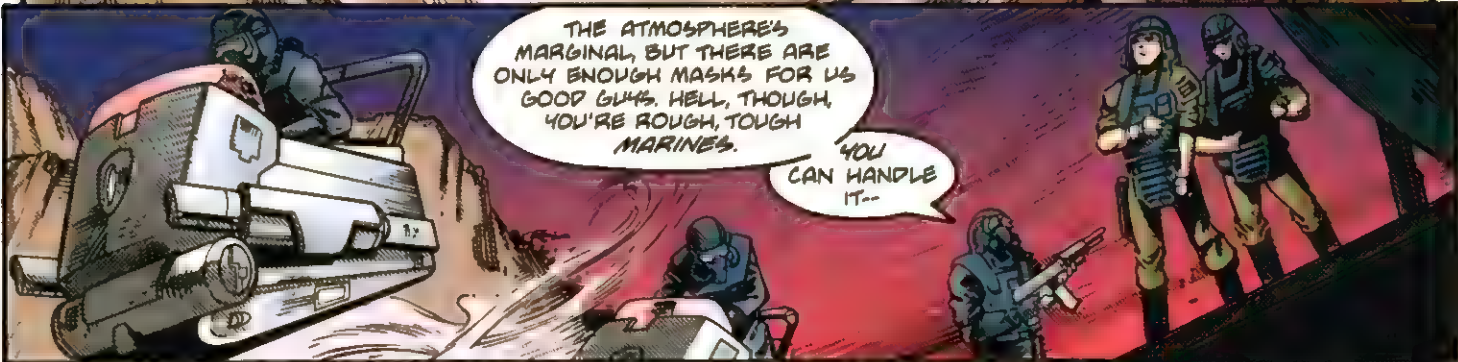
JE-SUS, MASSEY--ARE YOU SEEING THIS?



YEAH. PUT DOWN NEAR THE FORMATION AND DISPATCH THE FLOATERS.

MAKE SURE ALL THE DATA RECORDERS ARE UP--THEY'RE GOING TO WANT THIS ON DISC.

THEN DROP THE MARINES AND ENJOY THE SHOW.



THE ATMOSPHERE'S MARGINAL, BUT THERE ARE ONLY ENOUGH MASKS FOR US GOOD GUYS. HELL, THOUGH, YOU'RE ROUGH, TOUGH MARINES.

YOU CAN HANDLE IT--

I STILL DON'T LIKE THIS.

COME ON--YOU READ THE DOCUMENTATION. THE ADULTS ARE A BITCH, BUT THEY'RE GROUND BASED.

ONCE THE CRABLIKE THINGS ATTACH TO A HOST, THEY GO DORMANT. WE PICK THEM UP, WE GO HOME. NO PROBLEM.

YEAH, RIGHT--NO PROBLEM.





I KNEW I WOULD HAVE TO KILL THEM.

THE DUCTS WORMED THROUGH THE SHIP, SEPARATED BY AN INTRICATE NETWORK OF AUTOMATIC INTERIOR DOORS.

THE ALIENS USED SIMILAR TUNNELS TO ATTACK US ON RIM.



SOMEBODY PULLED THE LOADERS FROM THE MARINES' BLASTERS, PROBABLY THAT PIECE OF SHIT, STEPHENS.

I SAW WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIM SPATTERED DOWN IN THE LOADING BAY. SAVED ME THE TROUBLE.

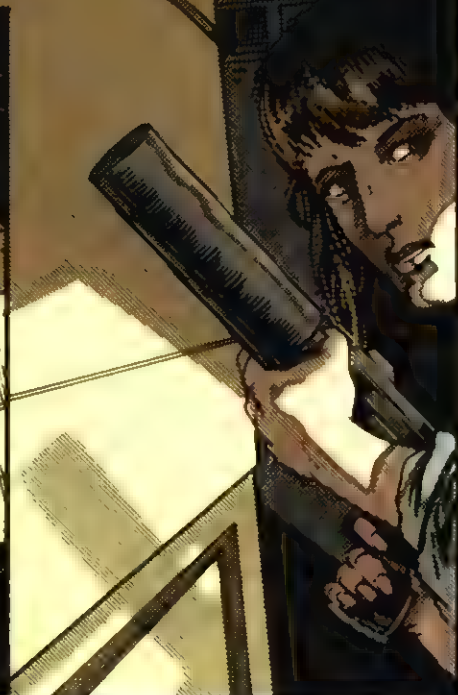
THE INTRUDERS WERE CALM, CONFIDENT THAT THEY WERE IN COMPLETE CONTROL. DESPITE SO MANY WARNINGS, WILKS AND HIS MARINES MADE A SIMILAR MISTAKE ON RIM.

IT WAS A MATTER OF PERCEPTION. THE ALIENS WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD.

THE BENEDICT DIDN'T BELONG TO THOSE BASTARDS IN THE LOADING BAY. IT BELONGED TO ME.



I COULDN'T IMAGINE STEPHENS ACTUALLY JETTISONING THE LOADERS--HE WAS TOO PRUDENT FOR THAT.





DOES THIS
MAKE ANY SENSE
TO YOU? BIONATIONAL--
THE GOVERNMENT--WE'RE
ALL SUPPOSED TO BE
ON THE SAME
SIDE.

THERE'RE
NO SIDES ANYMORE--
JUST MONEY--

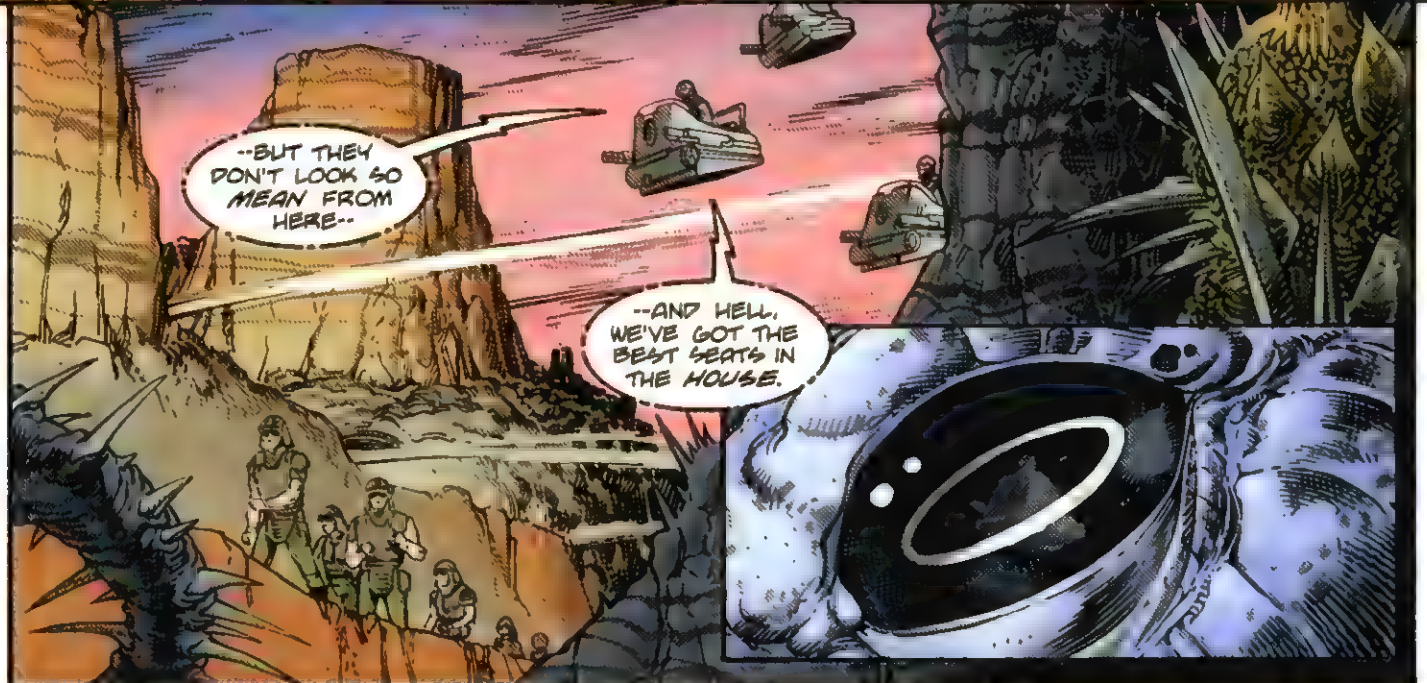
--AND WE'RE
EXPENDABLE.



CHRIST--I'M GETTING
BARE NOMINALS ON
ATMOSPHERE, AND THE
GRUNTS ARE HARDLY
AFFECTED--

THEY'RE
ACTING LIKE
IT'S ANOTHER
DAY IN BOOT
CAMP--

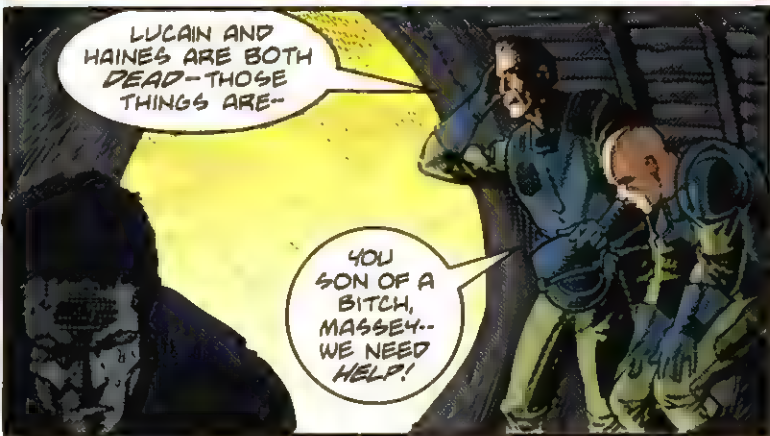
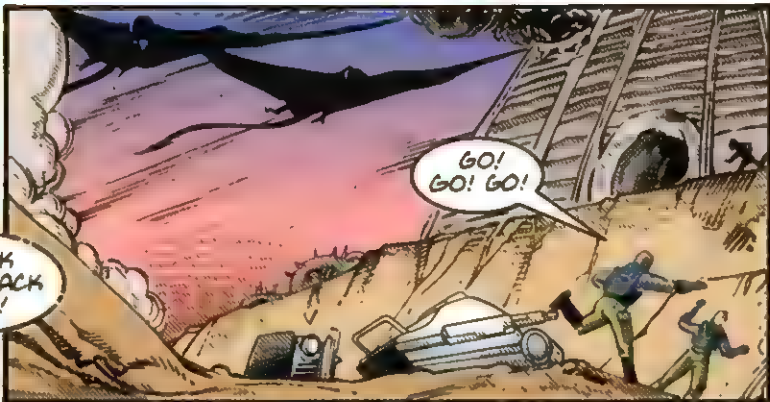
MAYBE
THEY BELIEVE ALL
THAT "WE'RE THE BEST"
RECRUITING
SHIT--



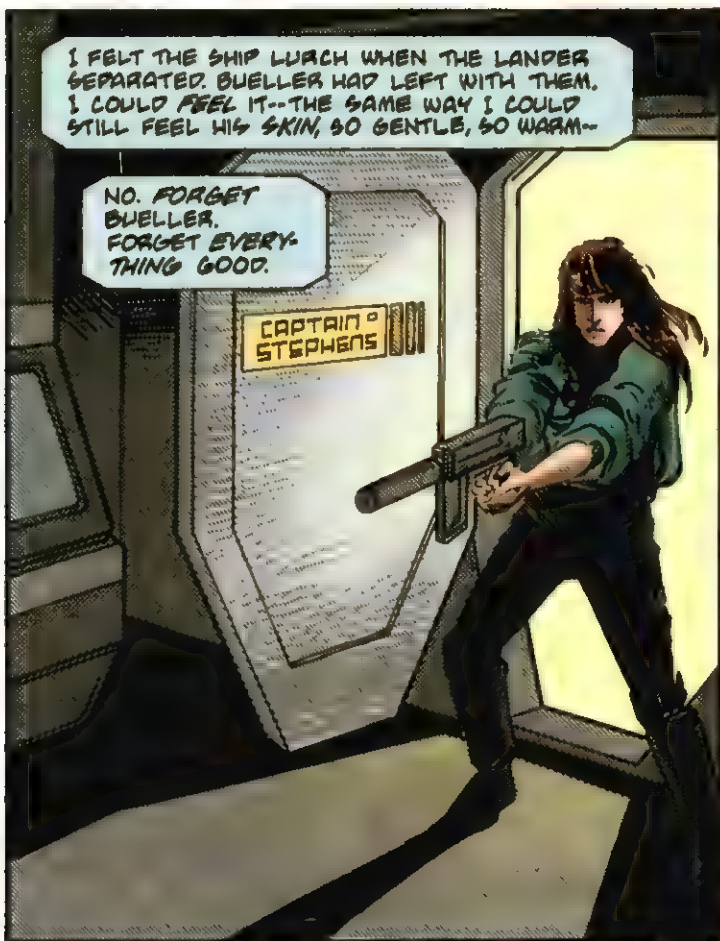
--BUT THEY
DON'T LOOK SO
MEAN FROM
HERE--

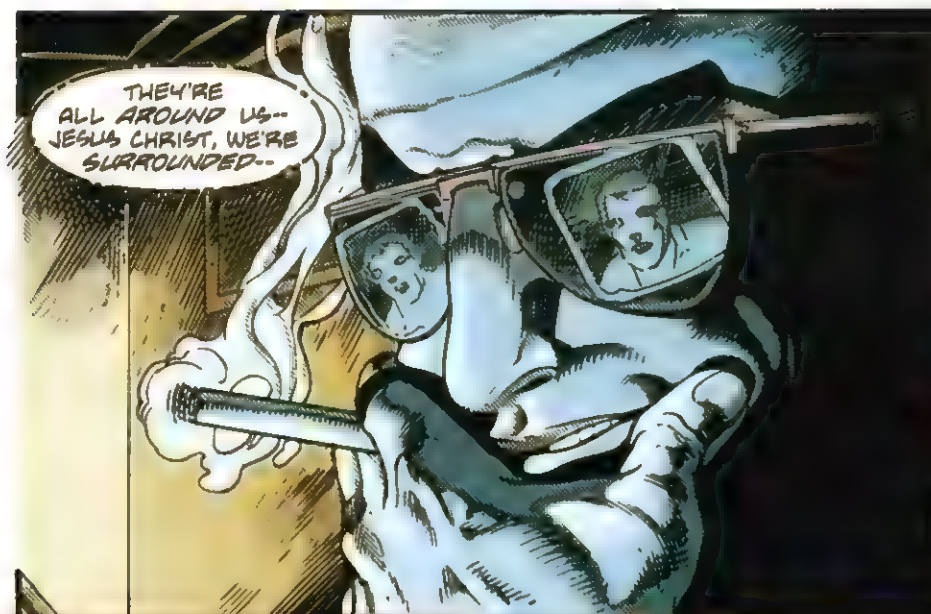
--AND HELL,
WE'VE GOT THE
BEST SEATS IN
THE HOUSE.



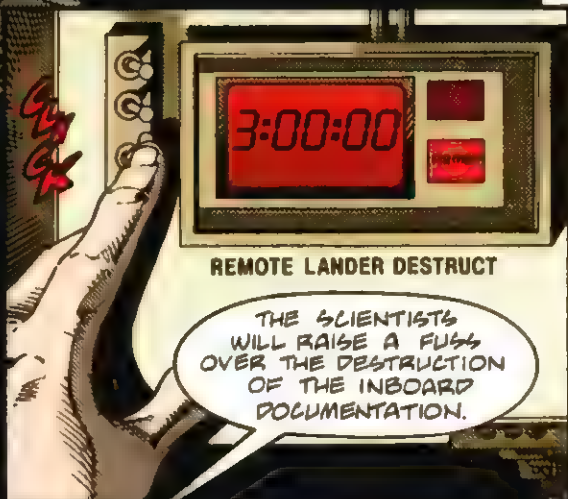








CAN BARELY
BREATHE-- MASSEY--
YOU BASTARD-- DO
SOMETHING--





WELL. WE SEEM TO HAVE MISSED ONE.

WHAT ARE YOU? SHIP'S MASCOT?

RELEASE WILKS. NOW.



THE ALIEN WOULD HAVE ATTACKED. WHAT WAS WRONG WITH ME? WHY COULDN'T I FIRE?

I-- I SAID RELEASE HIM.

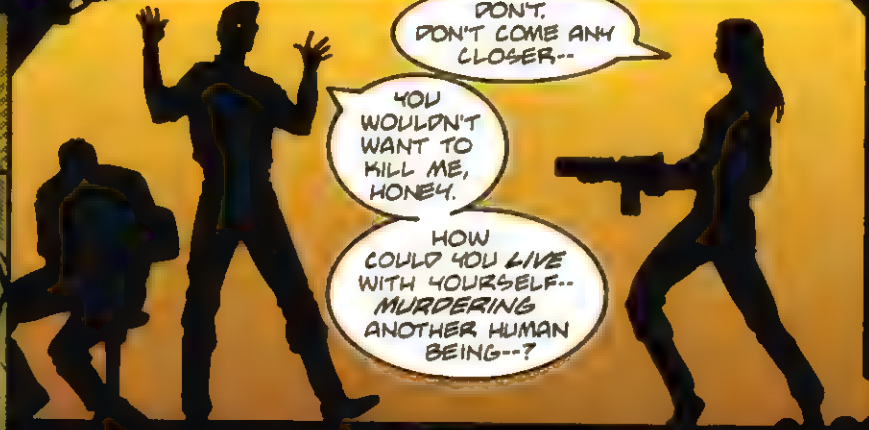


YOU'RE VERY PRETTY. YOU CAN'T BE ONE OF THESE HARD-ASS MARINES.

I'LL BET YOU'VE NEVER FIRED ONE OF THOSE TH--



SHOOT HIM, BILLIE!



DON'T. DON'T COME ANY CLOSER--

YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO KILL ME, HONEY.

HOW COULD YOU LIVE WITH YOURSELF-- MURDERING ANOTHER HUMAN BEING--?

IT WASN'T FAIR. I WANTED TO BE JUST LIKE THEM.

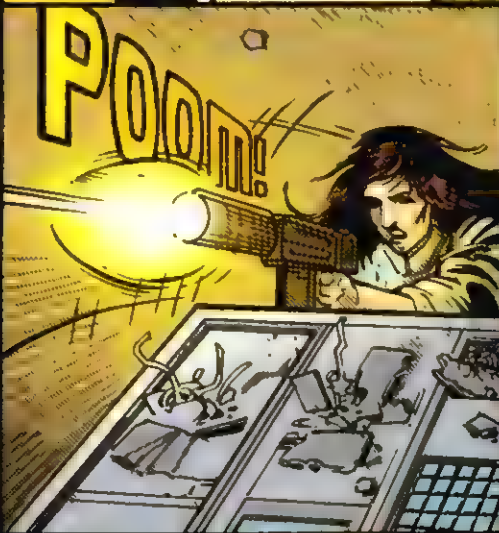


STAY BA--



GOD HELP ME. I WAS ONLY HUMAN.

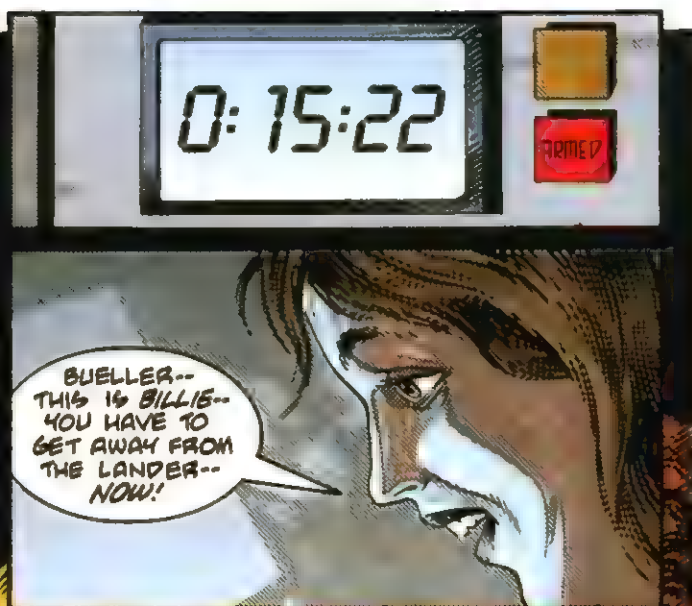






CAN'T YOU STOP IT?

THERE'S NO TIME, DAMN IT.



BUELLER-- THIS IS BILLIE-- YOU HAVE TO GET AWAY FROM THE LANDER-- NOW!



AUTO ALL THE CONTROLS. EVERYTHING. WE'LL HAVE TO TRANSFER THE BENEDICT'S NUKES TO THEIR LANDER AND SET THEM OURSELVES.

I DON'T CARE WHAT IT TAKES. I'M GOING TO FINISH IT.



BUELLER--LISTEN TO ME. WE'RE GOING TO USE THE INTRUDER'S LANDER TO RECOVER YOU.

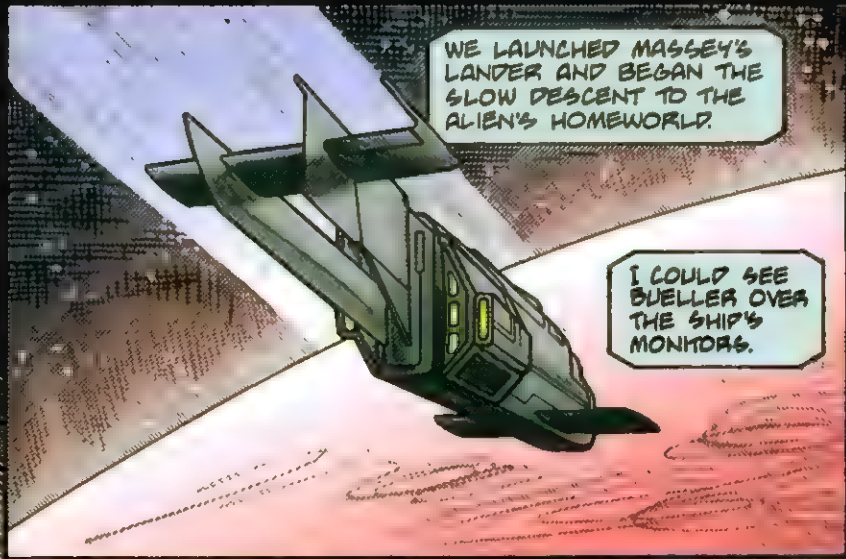
FIND SOMEWHERE SAFE TO WAIT FOR--



WE CAN'T WAIT--

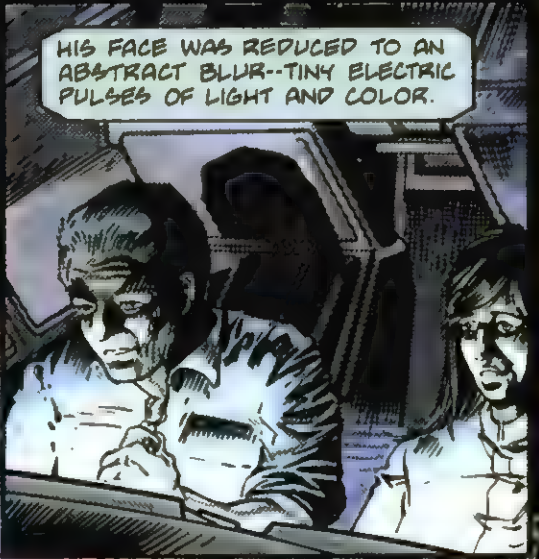
WE MANAGED TO SALVAGE THE BLASTERS AND AMMUNITION FROM THE LANDER. WE'RE GOING BACK TO THE HIVE.





WE LAUNCHED MASSEY'S
LANDER AND BEGAN THE
SLOW DESCENT TO THE
ALIEN'S HOMEWORLD.

I COULD SEE
BUELLER OVER
THE SHIP'S
MONITORS.



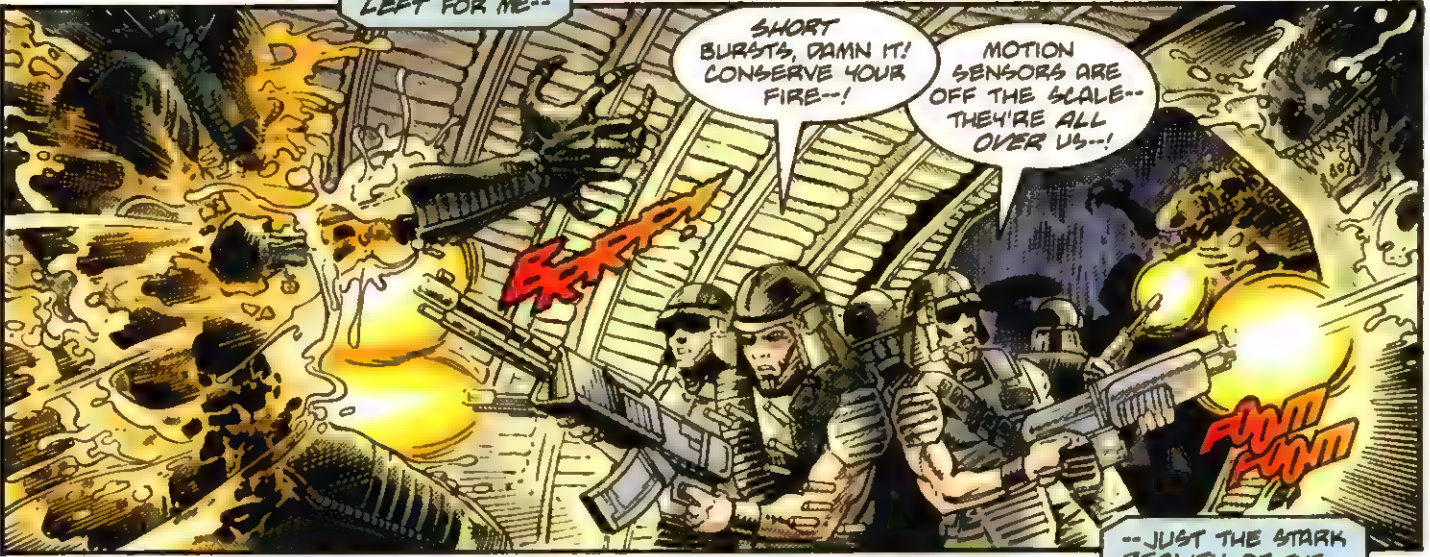
HIS FACE WAS REDUCED TO AN
ABSTRACT BLUR--TINY ELECTRIC
PULSES OF LIGHT AND COLOR.



WILKS IGNORES THE SCREENS,
LOST IN HIS DREAMS OF
VENGEANCE. AT LEAST HE
STILL HAD THAT.

I HAD
NOTHING.

THERE WERE
NO DREAMS
LEFT FOR ME--

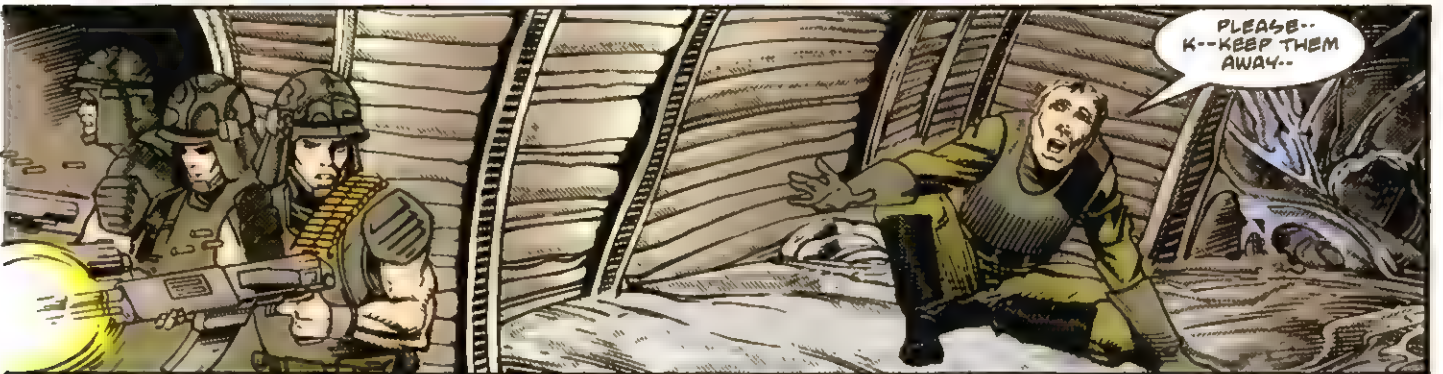
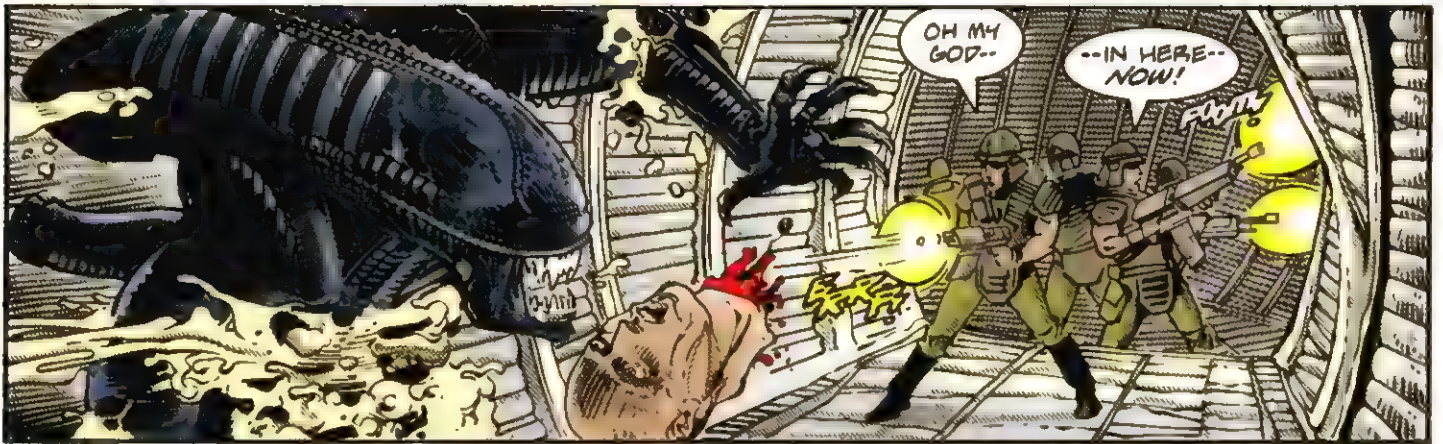


SHORT
BURSTS, DAMN IT!
CONSERVE YOUR
FIRE--!

MOTION
SENSORS ARE
OFF THE SCALE--
THEY'RE ALL
OVER US--!

--JUST THE STARK
REALITY OF THE
ALIEN--

MOVE
IT!





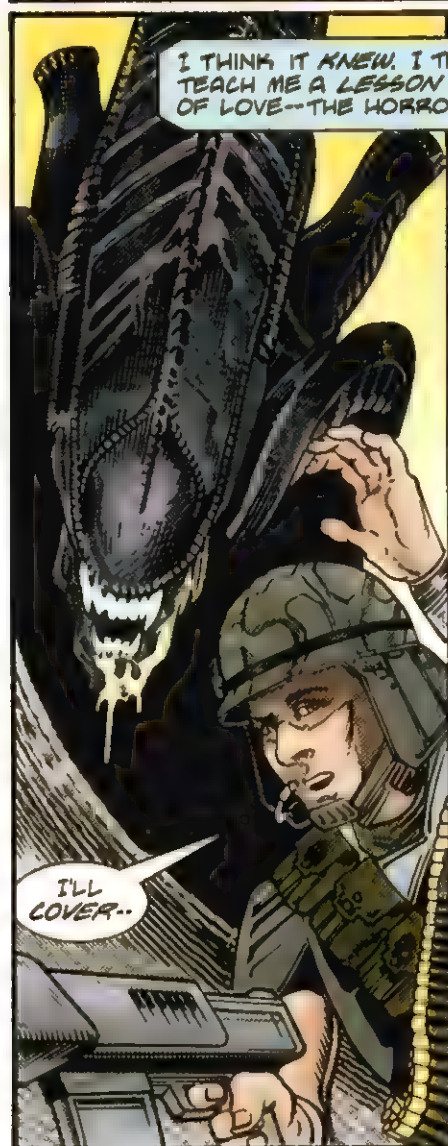
WILKS DROPPED THE LANDER JUST OUTSIDE THE ALIEN HIVE. SAND AND DUST DANCED AROUND THE SHIP LIKE SOME MOLTING, ETHEREAL SMOKE--



--LIKE PHOSPHORESCENT SWIRLS OF COLOR FLICKERING ACROSS THE LANDER'S FORWARD MONITOR.

DAMN IT, BUELLER, DON'T FALL BACK--!

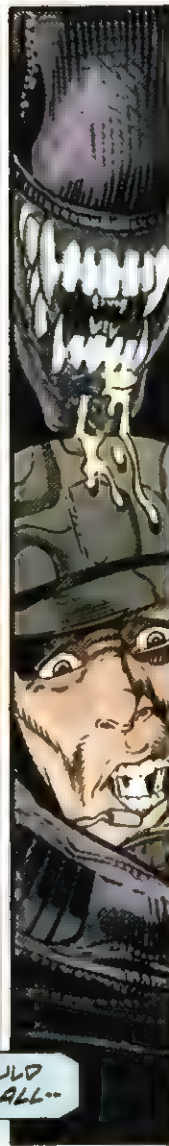
JUST KEEP MOVING--



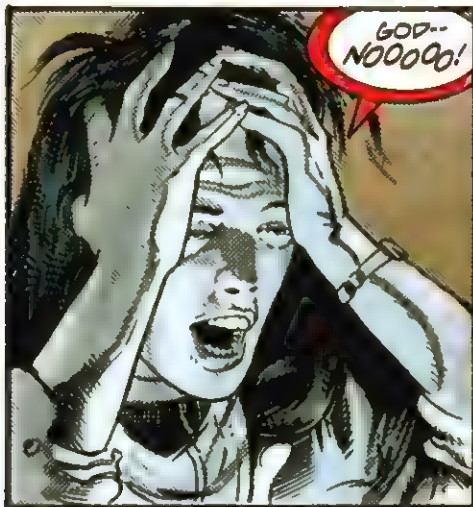
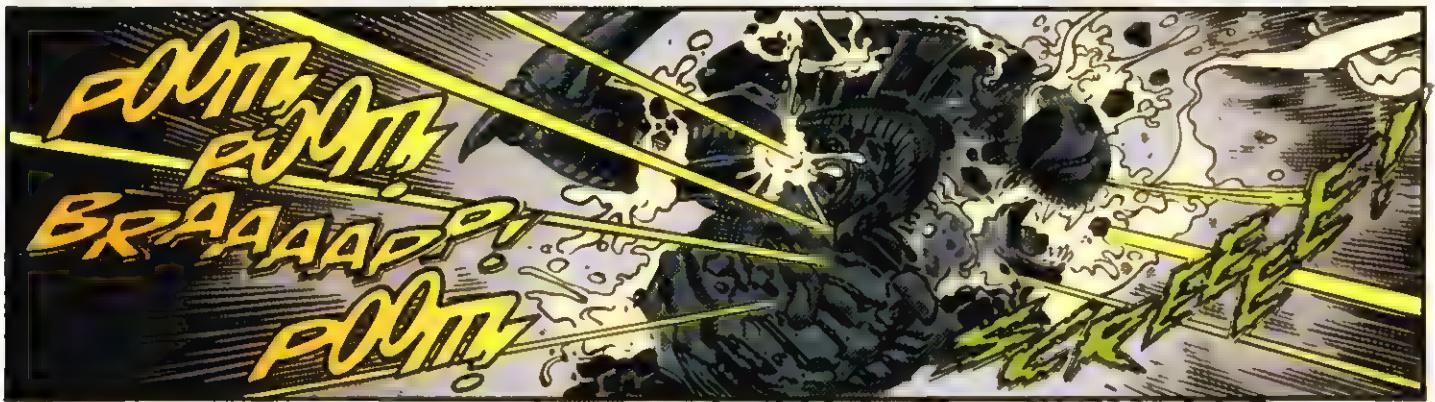
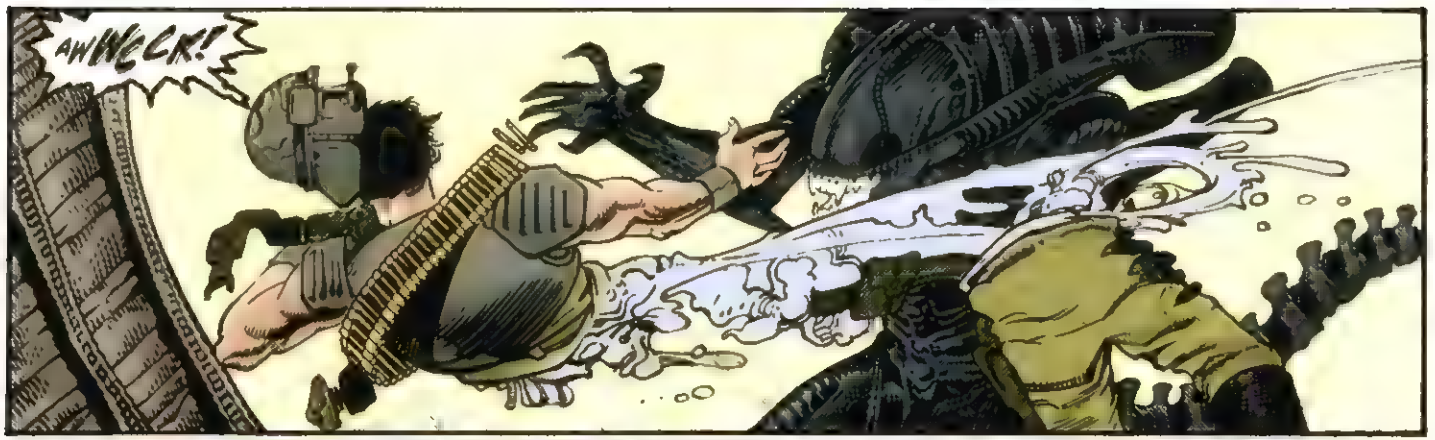
I THINK IT KNEW. I THINK IT WANTED TO TEACH ME A LESSON ABOUT THE FUTILITY OF LOVE--THE HORROR OF TRUST--



I'LL COVER--



--I COULD SEE IT ALL--





"WHY DO YOU THINK THEY WENT BACK FOR THOSE BASTARDS IN THE HIVE? THEIR PRINCIPAL FUNCTION IS TO PRESERVE LIFE. HUMAN LIFE."



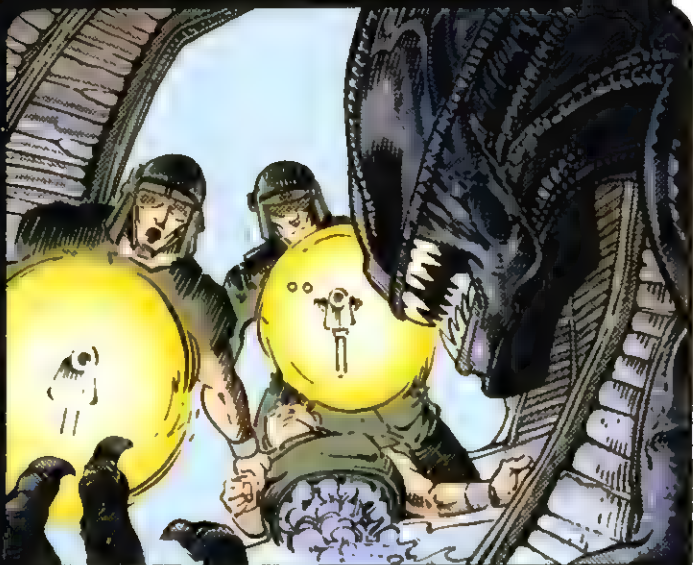
"THEY WERE--ENGINEERED-- JUST FOR THIS MISSION. SPENT THEIR WHOLE LIVES LOCKED INSIDE THAT MARINE COMPOUND, WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT."



"THEY'RE COST EFFICIENT AND EXPENDABLE. YOU, ME, STEVENS--WE WERE THE ONLY HUMANS ON BOARD"

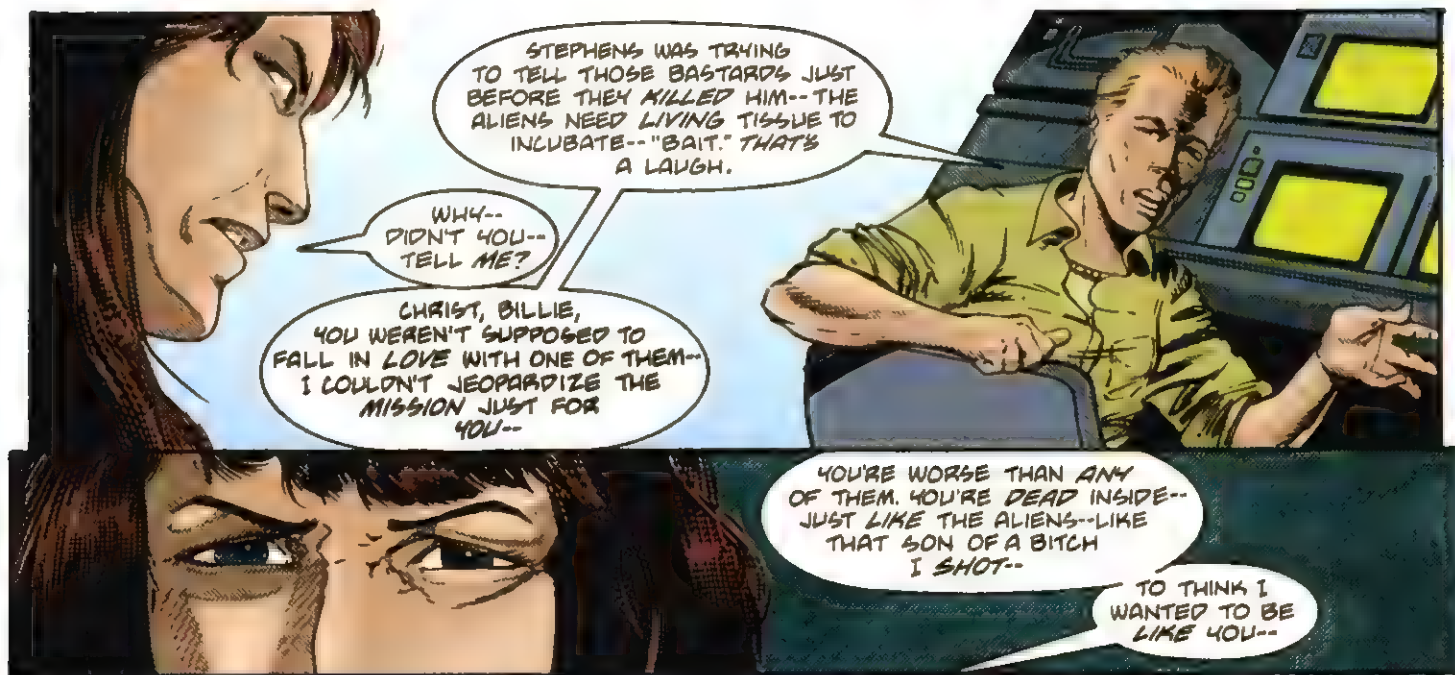


"THERE WERE INTERACTION PROBLEMS WITH EARLIER MODELS--HUMANS JUST DIDN'T LIKE THEM, SO THESE PROTOTYPES WERE DESIGNED TO SOCIALIZ-- THEY EAT LIKE US, TALK LIKE US--"



"DAMNED PROGRAMMERS WERE ALMOST TOO CLEVER. THE ANDROIDS DEVELOPED SENSITIVITIES. THERE WERE QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR EMOTIONAL STABILITY--HOW THEY'D REACT TO THE TRUTH--"

"--SO WE TREATED THEM AS EQUALS-- PLAYED ALONG WITH THE DECEPTION--"



HA-TNUNNPI

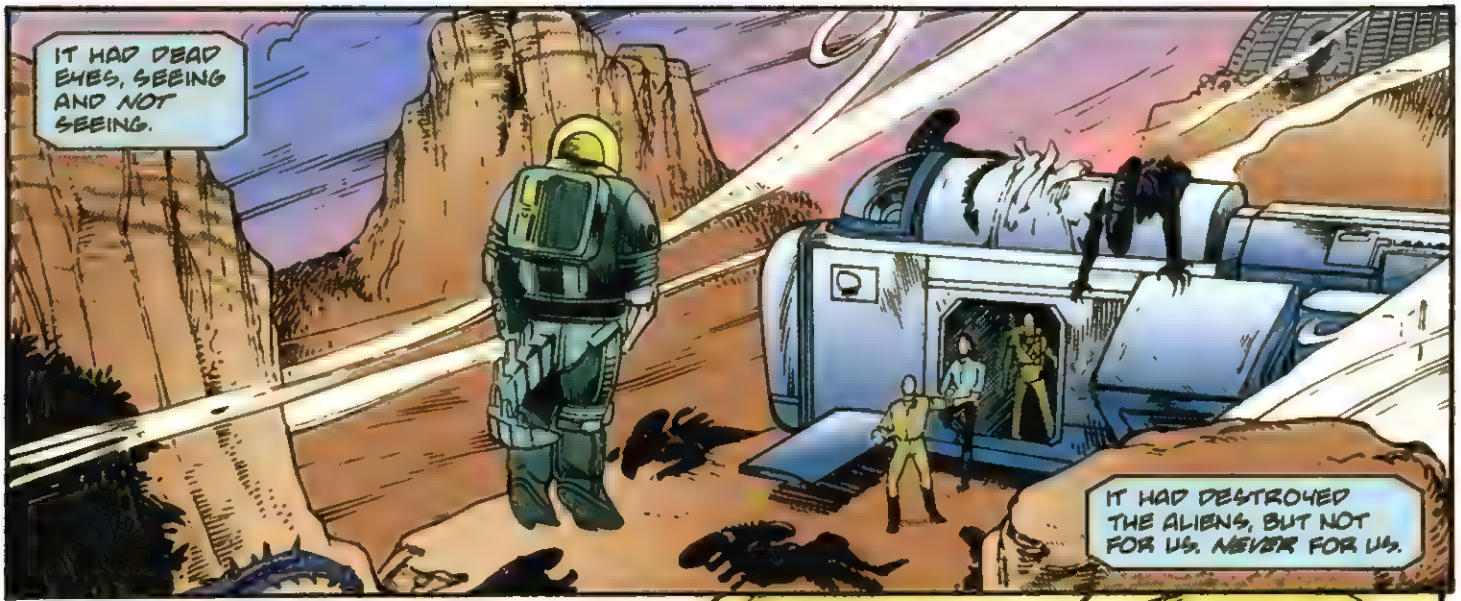






AT LEAST--NOTHING
HUMAN.





IT HAD DEAD EYES, SEEING AND NOT SEEING.

IT HAD DESTROYED THE ALIENS, BUT NOT FOR US. NEVER FOR US.



WHY?

IT DIDN'T SPEAK, BUT SOMETHING EXPLODED INSIDE MY HEAD, BRIGHT LIKE A MILLION SUNS--

THE IMAGES BOILED UP FROM SOME DEEPER PLACE, THE SAME PLANE AS PRIMAL INSTINCT-- HUNGER, PAIN, FEAR--

--HATRED.

BILLY--!

I-- CAN-- SEE--

MY NAME IS BILLIE.
I'M SIX YEARS OLD.
I LIVE ON A
WORLD CALLED
RIM.

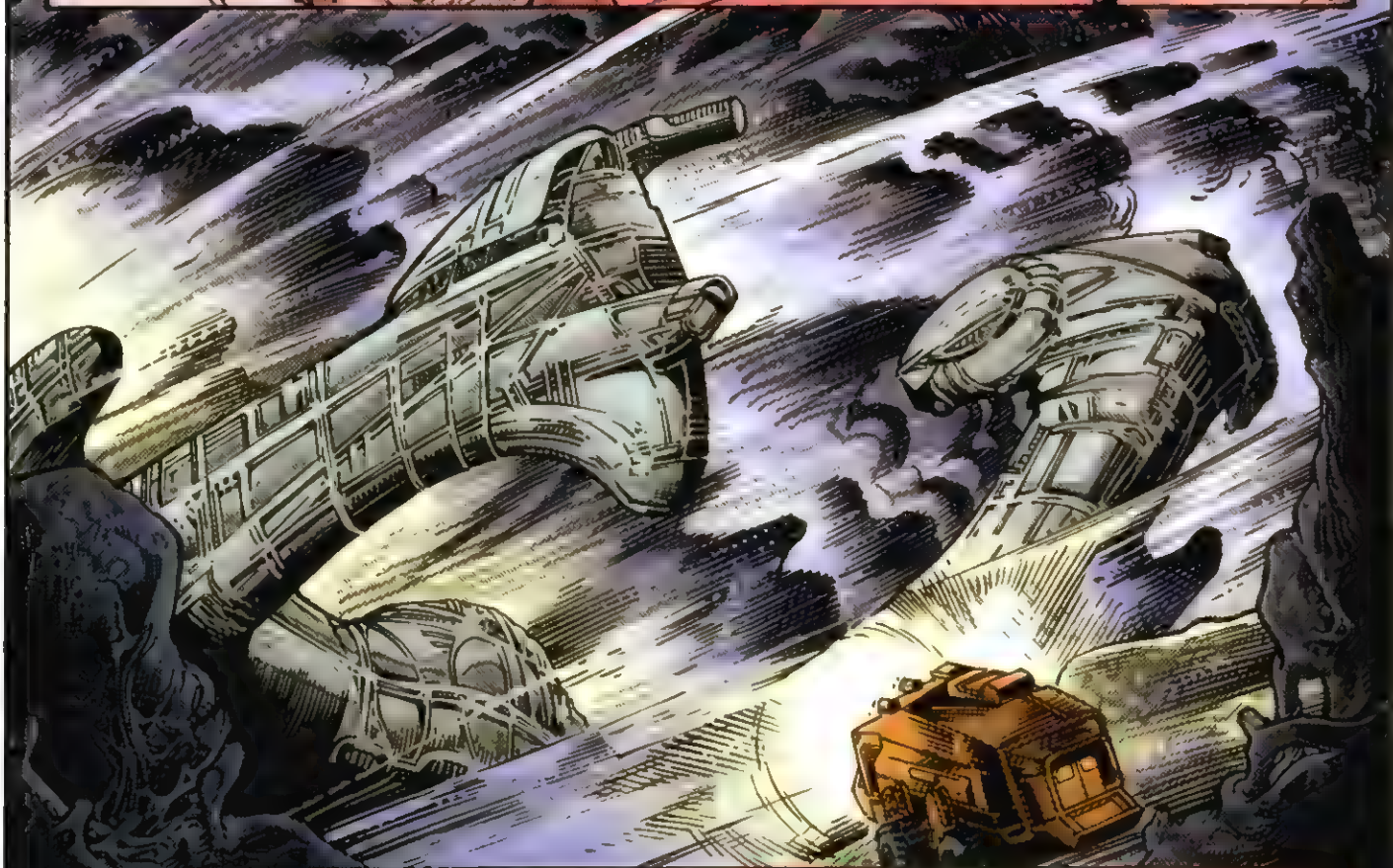
THERE ARE 159 OF US ON THE
PLANET. THE CORPORATION
CALLS US TERRAFORMERS. MY
FATHER CALLS US PIONEERS.

THE CORPORATION HAD SENT US OUT
TO INVESTIGATE SOME SORT OF
MAGNETIC SURGE. I CAN STILL
REMEMBER MY FATHER'S SMILE--THE
SCENT OF MY MOTHER'S PERFUME--

THE READINGS
ARE GOING OFF SCALE--
WE MUST HAVE FOUND THE
MOTHER LOVE--!

--AND
YOU KNOW
THE RULES--
WE FIND IT,
WE KEEP
IT.

--MY GOD



HARD TO BELIEVE
SOMETHING THIS BIG--WITH
THIS KIND OF RESONANCE--
WENT WITHOUT BEING
NOTICED--

IT'S PARTLY
SHELTERED BY NATURAL
ROCK FORMATIONS--AND
THE DAMNED EC-SATS
NEVER WORKED UP
TO SPEC--

WHAT'S
IT MATTER?
IT'S OURS
NOW.



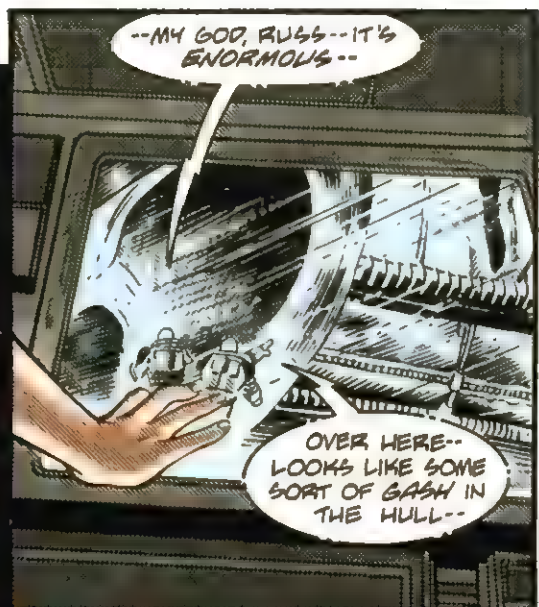
MY NAME'S BILLIE--I--I'M NOT SIX YEARS OLD--JESUS, IT WAS ALL SO LONG AGO. I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER. DON'T MAKE ME REMEMBER.

YOU KIDS STAY INSIDE I MEAN IT-- NO FOOLING AROUND.

YOU CAN WATCH OVER THE MONITOR, BUT DON'T TOUCH.

I CAN'T STAND TO SEE IT HAPPEN AGAIN.

WIND'S REALLY KICKING UP--WE'LL MAKE A QUICK LOOP TO SECURE THE CLAIM, THEN HEAD BACK--



--MY GOD, RUSS--IT'S ENORMOUS--

OVER HERE-- LOOKS LIKE SOME SORT OF GASH IN THE HULL--



I WAS ONLY SIX YEARS OLD. THE DISCOVERY OF THE DERELICT DIDN'T REALLY MEAN ANYTHING TO ME.

--THIS IS INCREDIBLE-- EVERYTHING'S SMOOTH, ALMOST ORGANIC--

WE HAD TERRAFORMED A BARREN ROCK INTO A VIABLE, LIFE-SUSTAINING PLANET.



WE HAD BATTLED TIME, SPACE, THE ELEMENTS-- AND WON. WE WEREN'T AFRAID.

--SARAH-- IN HERE--!



THAT CAME LATER.

MAYBE THAT THING IN THE DERELICT SHARED OUR BLIND ARROGANCE--

--UNTIL THE ALIENS KILLED IT.

IT SOMEHOW KNEW THAT I HAD
SEEN THE WRECKAGE. WE SHARED
A GROTESQUE FORM OF EMPATHY.

BILLIE--WHAT'S
IT DOING TO
YOU?

UKKK--
IT--WANTS ME TO
KNOW--

I COULD ONLY PICK OUT BITS AND
PIECES--LIKE SOMEONE BLINKING
CHANNELS ON A VIDEO.

IT DESCRIBED A SHIP--SOME
KIND OF MISSION--

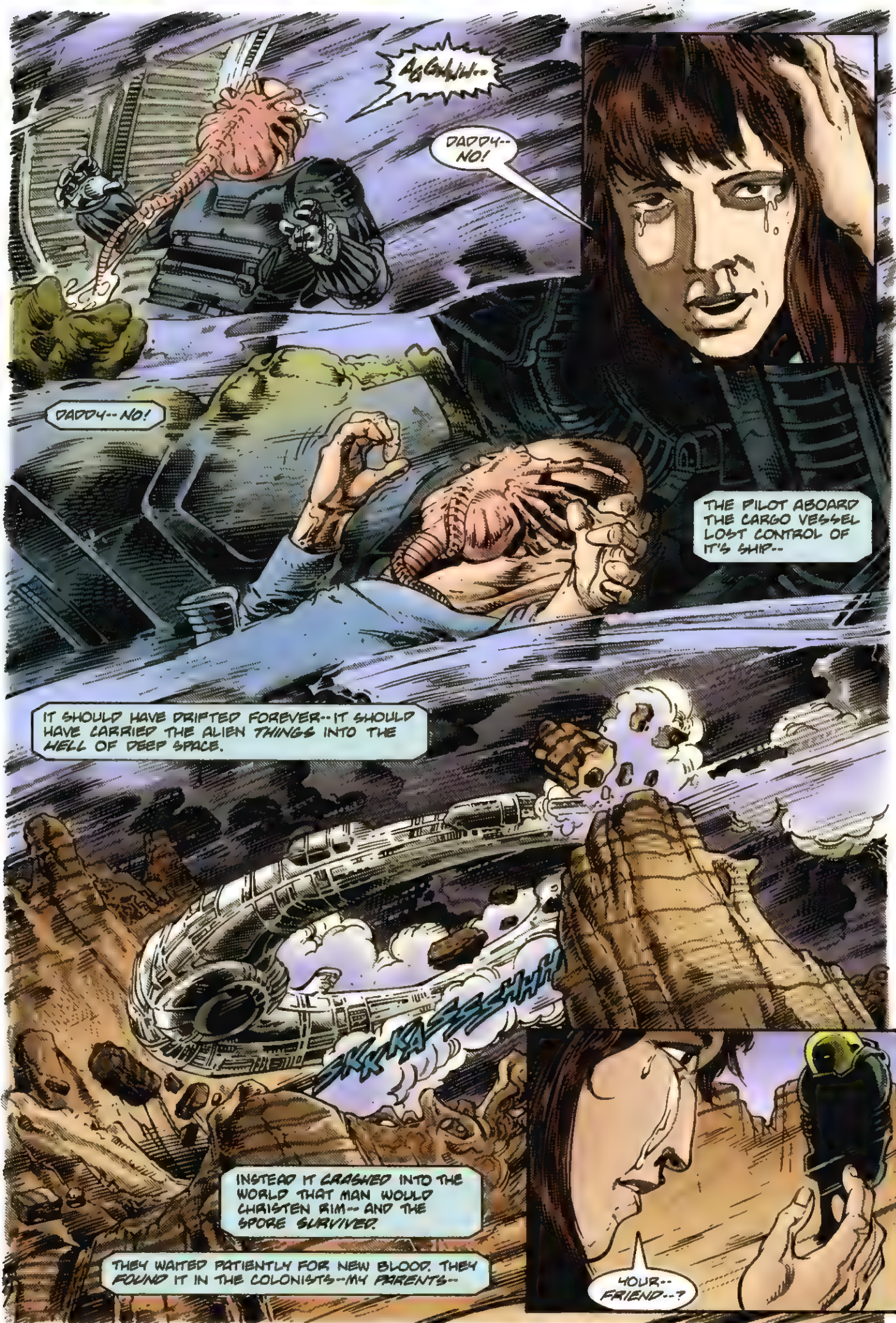
THE EGGS--OH GOD--
THE EGGS--

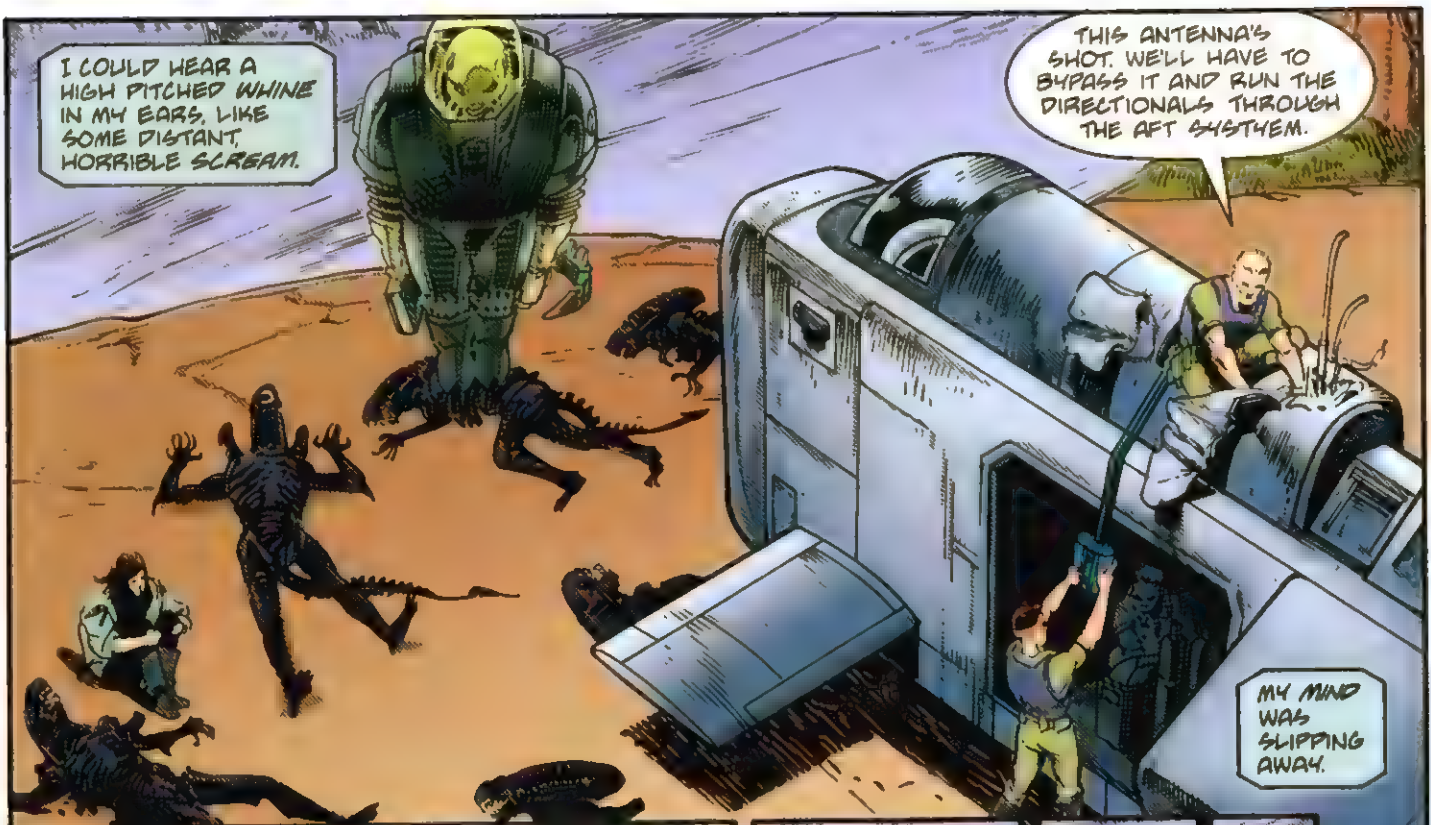
DON'T--MAKE ME--
SEE IT--AGAIN--

MY NAME--
IS BILLIE--
I'M SIX
YEARS
OLD--

--MY FATHER KNELT--IN FRONT OF THE PODS. I
COULD SEE HIM OVER THE TRACTOR'S MONITOR--
I COULD SEE THE EXCITEMENT IN HIS EYES--

JESUS, SARAH, I
SEE SOMETHING MOVING--
I THINK THEY'RE
STILL ALI--





I COULD HEAR A HIGH PITCHED WHINE IN MY EARS, LIKE SOME DISTANT, HORRIBLE SCREAM.

THIS ANTENNA'S SHOT. WE'LL HAVE TO BYPASS IT AND RUN THE DIRECTIONALS THROUGH THE AFT SYSTEM.

MY MIND WAS SLIPPING AWAY.

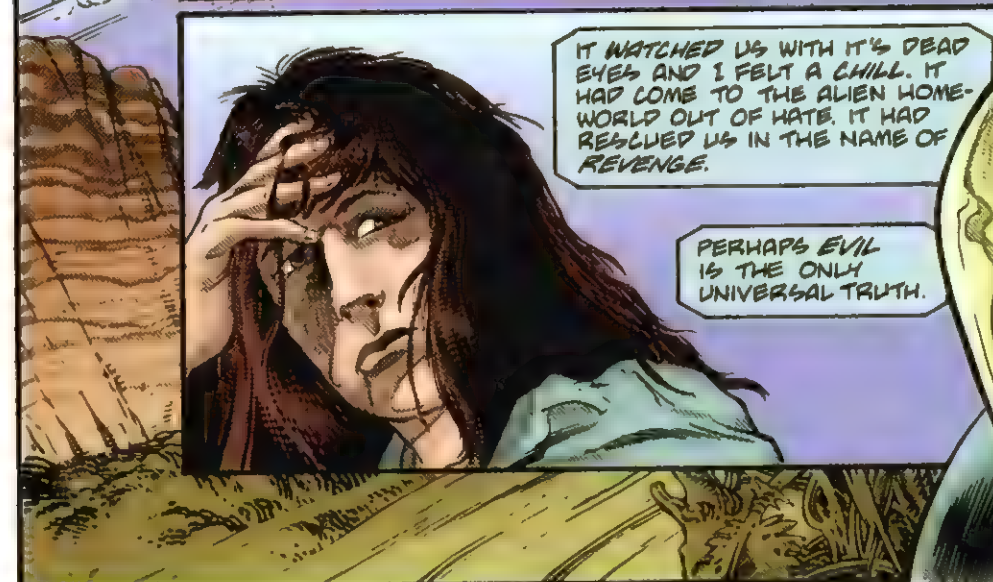


WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG, YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND EVIL. IT'S AN INTANGIBLE THING--LIKE THE AIR OR THE SKY--

--AND JUST AS PERVERSIVE.



I WANTED TO BELIEVE THERE WAS SOMETHING BETTER--THAT THERE WAS SOME KIND OF HOPE.



IT WATCHED US WITH IT'S DEAD EYES AND I FELT A CHILL. IT HAD COME TO THE ALIEN HOME-WORLD OUT OF HATE. IT HAD RESCUED US IN THE NAME OF REVENGE.

PERHAPS EVIL IS THE ONLY UNIVERSAL TRUTH.



EYES ONLY
DOUBLE A-ALPHA
LOG ON, ORONA.

I'VE LOST
TRACK OF TIME SINCE
THE BIONATIONAL ATTACK
I'VE BARRICADED MYSELF
IN MY OFFICE TO GIVE ME
TIME TO PREPARE THIS
FINAL REPORT.

EVIDENTLY THE ALIEN
QUEEN IS ABLE TO
COMMUNICATE IN SOME
SUBCONSCIOUS
FASHION. WITH OTHER
SPECIES. IN HUMAN
BEINGS, THESE
DISSEMINATIONS
MANIFEST THEMSELVES
IN THE FORM OF
PATTERN NIGHTMARES.

THE DREAMS WERE
A LURE.

AT FIRST WE THOUGHT
WE'D BE ABLE TO
CONTAIN THE SPORE.
INFESTATION SEEMED
LIMITED TO A
NARROW GEOGRAPHIC
RANGE.

AAGH!!

GLOR
FLAME
BRRRP!

AND YET FOR EVERY CLUSTER
WE FOUND THERE WERE TEN
MORE JUST LIKE IT.

NAME'S OSTROW.
LOOKS LIKE HE WAS
SOME SORT OF BIG SHOT
WITH BIONATIONAL.

BURN
THE SON
OF A
BITCH.

THE ALIEN'S SUBCONSCIOUS BAIT TRANSCENDED CLASS AND POLITICAL BOUNDARIES. WE FOUND HIVES EVERYWHERE.

WITH EACH NEW DISCOVERY, OUR HOPE OF DESTROYING THE CREATURES BEFORE THEY ENTERED THE CIVILIAN POPULATION FADED.

I WANT A PERIMETER AROUND THE HOUSE AND I WANT AIR SUPPORT, NOW--!

COME ON, MOVE IT!

POOM!

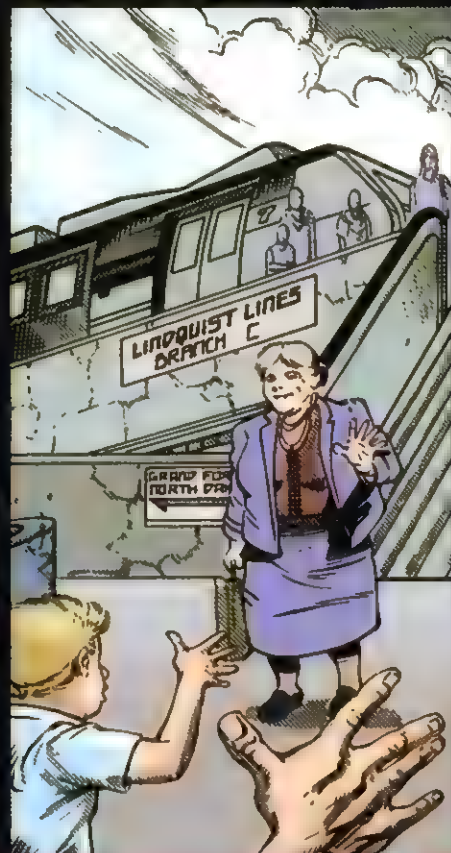
HOWEVER WE STILL CONSIDERED CONTAINMENT AN OPTION. IN STUDYING THE BIONATIONAL FILES WE LEARNED THEIR QUEEN HAD GESTATED A NUMBER OF WEEKS PRIOR TO MATURATION.

USING THEIR EXPERIMENT AS A BASELINE, I ASSUMED WE STILL HAD TIME BEFORE ANY NEW QUEENS WOULD BECOME VIABLE.

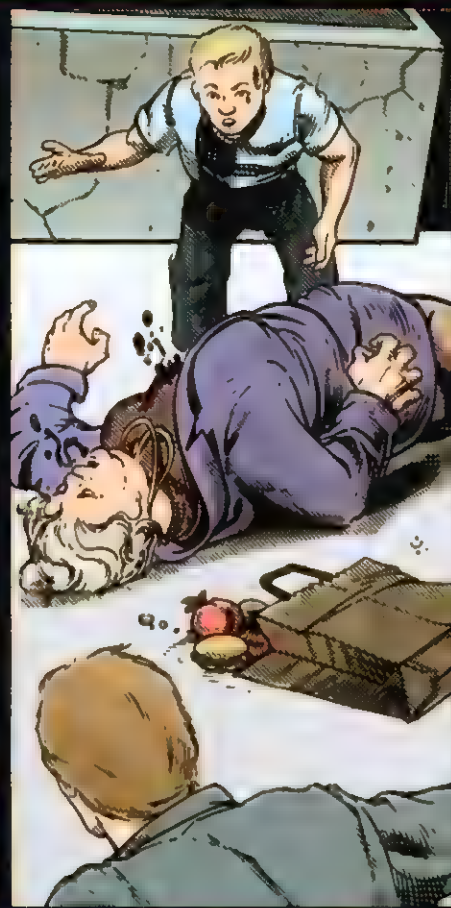
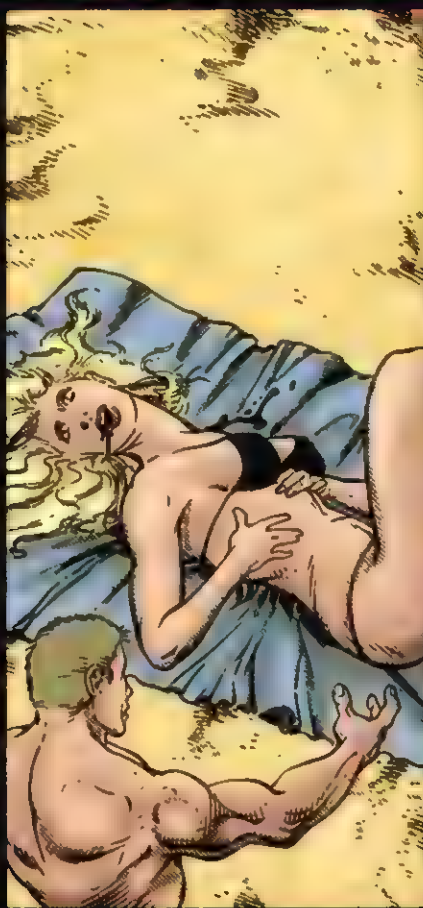
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

PAM
PAM
PAM

I WAS WRONG.



PERHAPS OUR WORST MISTAKE WAS UNDERESTIMATING THE SHEER INSTINCTUAL CUNNING OF THE CREATURES. WE DIDN'T SEE THE UNDERLYING PATTERN BEHIND THEIR EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS--THE WAY EVERY FACET OF THEIR EXISTENCE WAS GEARED TOWARD PROPAGATION. THE QUEENS MATURED AT WHATEVER SPEED THEIR SURVIVAL DICTATED.



WE HAD ASSUMED THE GESTATION PERIOD WAS TIME FOR THE ALIEN EMBRYO TO FEED AND GROW, BUT IT WAS MORE THAN THAT. IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE UNKNOWING HOST TO SPREAD ITS SPORE TO OTHER SITES.

WHUMP!

THERE WAS A GEOMETRIC PERFECTION TO THE INFESTATIONS.

EACH QUEEN WOULD LAY STILL MORE QUEENS, AND WITH EVERY GENERATION THE SPORE BECAME MORE ENTRENCHED, MORE--

AHH. AT LAST.

THE CIVILIAN AUTHORITY WAS WEAK IN THE FACE OF THE DEVASTATION. WHEN THE GENERALS FINALLY STAGED THEIR COUP IT SEEMED ALMOST--WELCOME.

AGHH--YOU CAN'T DO THIS-- IT'S AGAINST THE--

SHUT UP!

THE MILITARY CREATED TESTING CENTERS WHERE PHYSICIANS CHECKED CIVILIANS FOR SIGNS OF THE ALIEN INFECTION. AT FIRST THE TESTS WERE VOLUNTARY.

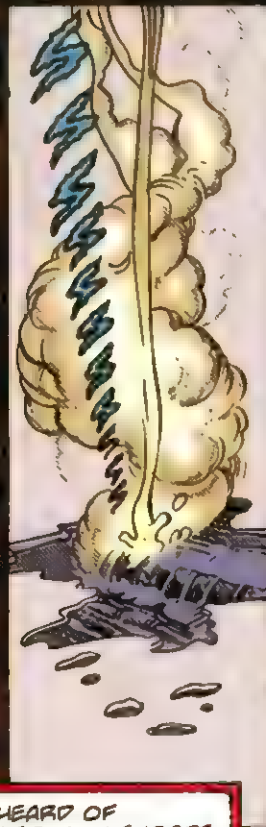
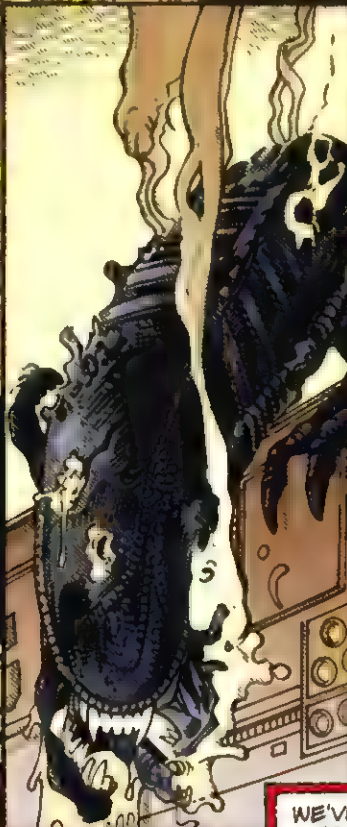
TESTING CENTER

WITHIN DAYS THAT CHANGED.

THERE WERE RUMORS THE MILITARY WAS USING THE PRETEXT OF ALIEN INFECTION TO ELIMINATE POLITICAL DISSIDENTS--THE POOR, THE DISAFFECTED--

AS IF SUCH PETTY RIVALRIES EVEN MATTERED.

VITAL SERVICES--
WATER, ELECTRICITY--
BEGAN TO FAIL.



WE'VE HEARD OF
INFESTATIONS IN EUROPE,
AUSTRALIA. THE SEED
IS GROWING WITH
REMARKABLE SPEED

FROM ALL THIS, I'VE COME TO
UNDERSTAND SOMETHING
ABOUT HUMANITY.



MAN IS AN ANIMAL,
DRIVEN BY ANIMAL
PASSIONS. "CIVILIZATION"
IS A PATHETIC CHARADE
OF MANNERS, PREDI-
CATED ON A TISSUE-
THIN VEIL OF LIES.



IN THE FUTURE-- IF
THERE IS A FUTURE--
HISTORIANS MAY BLAME
OUR FAILURES ON SOME
EXTERNAL CAUSE--

--THE ALIENS.
BIONATIONAL.
FATE.

I KNOW THE
TRUTH. THOSE
THINGS DIDN'T
DESTROY US.



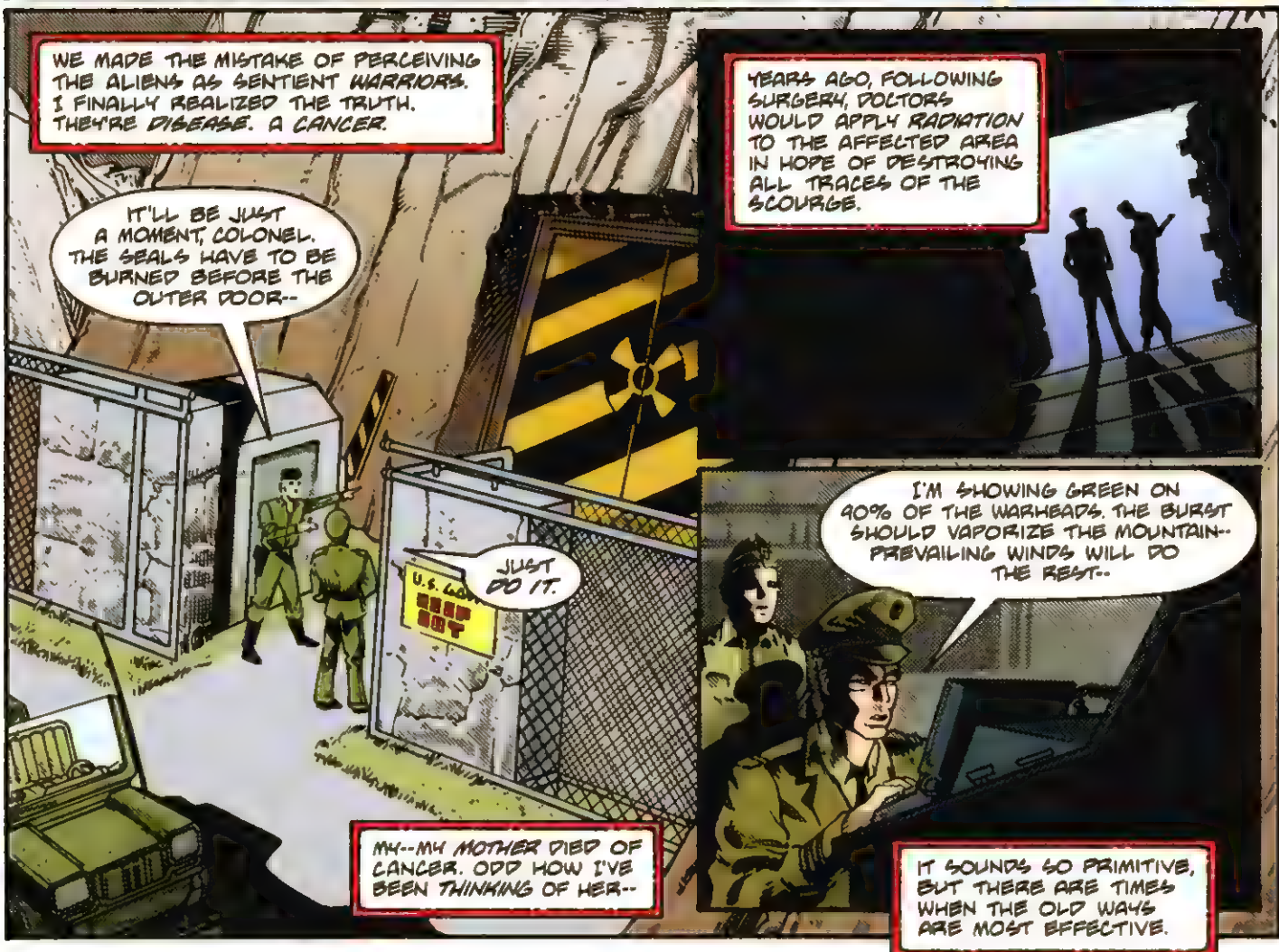
WE DID.



THEY--
THEY'LL
BE HERE
SOON.

THE MILITARY HAS ORGANIZED OFF-
WORLD SHIPS TO EVACUATE "VITAL
PERSONNEL" TO THE OUTER
COLONIES--MAINLY THEIR OWN
PRECIOUS HIDES.

I'VE CHOSEN TO
REMAIN BEHIND.



WE MADE THE MISTAKE OF PERCEIVING
THE ALIENS AS SENTIENT WARRIORS.
I FINALLY REALIZED THE TRUTH.
THEY'RE DISEASE. A CANCER.

YEARS AGO, FOLLOWING
SURGERY, DOCTORS
WOULD APPLY RADIATION
TO THE AFFECTED AREA
IN HOPE OF DESTROYING
ALL TRACES OF THE
SCOURGE.

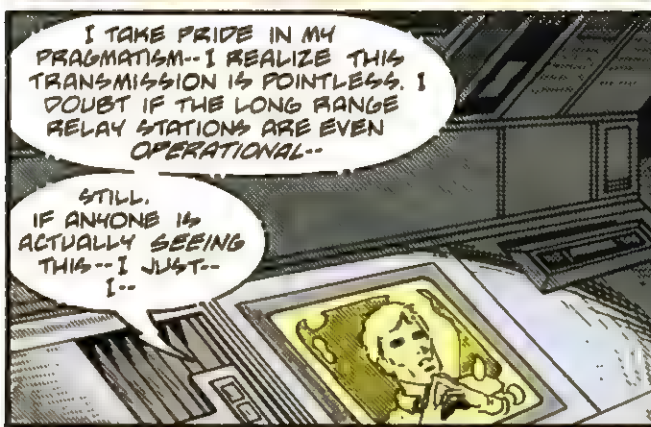
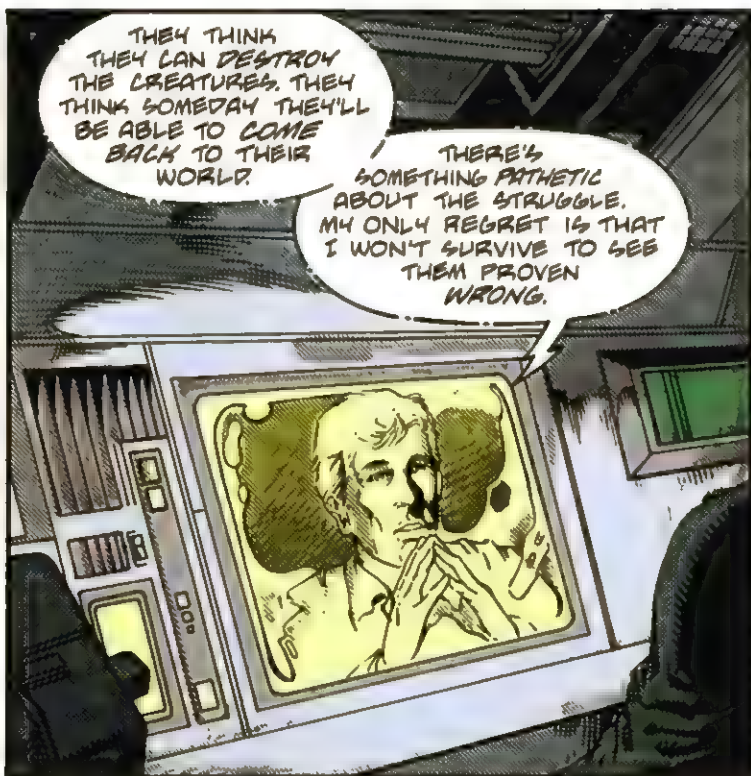
IT'LL BE JUST
A MOMENT, COLONEL.
THE SEALS HAVE TO BE
BURNED BEFORE THE
OUTER DOOR--

JUST
DO IT.

I'M SHOWING GREEN ON
90% OF THE WARHEADS. THE BURST
SHOULD VAPORIZE THE MOUNTAIN--
PREVAILING WINDS WILL DO
THE REST--

MY--MY MOTHER DIED OF
CANCER. ODD HOW I'VE
BEEN THINKING OF HER--

IT SOUNDS SO PRIMITIVE,
BUT THERE ARE TIMES
WHEN THE OLD WAYS
ARE MOST EFFECTIVE.





DAMN THEM--
DAMN THEM ALL
TO HELL.

THEY THOUGHT
THEY COULD BREED
THE MONSTERS.
CHRIST--

--THE
MONSTERS
WERE
BREEDING
US!

WE'VE
GOT TO GO
BACK.



TO THOSE
THINGS? TO
SPIT AND POLISH
BASTARDS? I'M
NOT SURE WHICH
IS WORSE--



IT'S OVER,
BILLIE. WE'RE
HELPLESS.

YOU'RE
RIGHT. WE'RE
HELPLESS.



IT'S
NOT.

DESTROYING THE ALIENS HAD BEEN AN ALL CONSUMING PASSION, YET THERE WAS LITTLE SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT AS WE LEFT TO RENDEZVOUS WITH THE BENEDICT.

WILKS WENT THROUGH THE MOTIONS BECAUSE "THE MOTIONS" WERE ALL WE HAD LEFT.

THE "OTHER" WATCHED AND APPROVED, AND IN THE END, REVENGE WAS JUST ANOTHER CHEMICAL REACTION--LIKE ALL THINGS IN LIFE--

ONE INSTANT, THE HIVE WAS THERE.

THE NEXT INSTANT, IT WAS GONE.

FINALLY, WILKS KNEW HE HAD TO GO BACK. THERE SIMPLY WASN'T ANYTHING ELSE.

COURSE ENTERED, GRAVITY DRIVE UP--

LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.

WE WERE NOTHING WHEN WE LEFT EARTH. WE'D BEEN SENT TO FIND SPECIMENS. WE WERE RETURNING WITH SALVATION.

THE WORD SEEMED HOLLOW, RIDICULOUS. WHERE WOULD I FIND MY SALVATION?

--BUELLER?

DON'T-- PLEASE--

ARE YOU--ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

PLEASE, BILLIE--DON'T LOOK AT ME--

I--I CAN'T. I NEED TO KNOW.

I NEED TO KNOW IF--IF WHAT WE HAD WAS REAL.

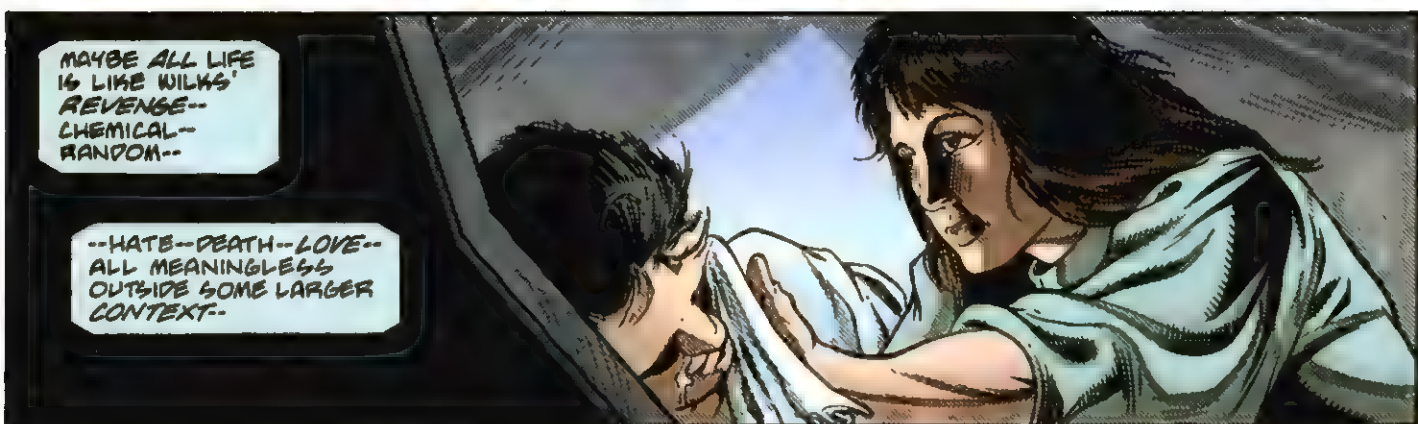
WHEN THAT--THING TORE INTO ME--I REMEMBER THINKING HOW MUCH I LOVED YOU--

--THEN I SAW WHAT WAS LEFT--AND SUDDENLY I KNEW--

--GOD, WE ALL KNEW--

WILKS SAID IT WAS JUST PROGRAMMING--PART OF SOME SOCIALIZATION PROCESS--YOU BELIEVED YOU WERE HUMAN BECAUSE IT WAS EASIER--

BUT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN US. IT CAN'T.



TIME PASSED QUICKLY.
FOR THE FIRST TIME
SINCE AIM, I FELT A
SENSE OF CALM.

EARTH DRIFTED BELOW US
LIKE SOME BRIGHT TOY,
AND AT LONG LAST WE
WERE HOME.

WE HAVEN'T
GOT MUCH TIME. THE
CREATURES HAVE BREACHED
THE GALVESTON SECURITY
LINE--I THOUGHT
ORONA SAID--

ORONA'S DEAD--!
HAPPENED WEEKS AGO--
WE FOUND WHAT WAS
LEFT OF HIM INSIDE THE
MAIN BIO LAB--

SIR--WE'RE PICKING UP
TWO SHIPS ON THE DS SCANNER--
ONE'S EMITTING A STANDARD-TYPE
FOUR BEACON--THE OTHER IS
UNIDENTIFIED--

THE TYPE FOUR'S
ASKING PERMISSION TO
LAND. WE'VE CANNIBALIZED
MOST OF THE TRANSLOC
COMPUTERS, BUT
I MANAGED TO PULL A
PRELIMINARY I.D.--

THE BENEDICT--MY GOD--
STEPHEN'S SHIP--

GRANT PERMISSION FOR
LANDING. I'LL MEET THEM AT
THE PAD PERSONALLY--

WIND AND RAIN BATTERED THE SHIP AS WE SETTLED ON THE LANDING PLATFORM. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF NATURE ITSELF WERE REBEL-
LING AGAINST THE MILITARY'S PLAN.

THE RAIN REMINDED ME OF RIM--REMINDED ME OF MY INNOCENCE--

TAKE THE SYNTHETICS TO REHAB--WE'LL DEAL WITH THEM LATER--

--ONE OF THE BIONATIONAL EXECUTIVES TOLD US ABOUT STEPHENS AFTER ALL THE SHIT CAME DOWN--

--YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THOSE BASTARDS ANY--

DAMN IT, LISTEN TO ME-- ORONA TRANSMITTED A MESSAGE ABOUT THE DETONATION JUST BEFORE HE DIED. YOU HAVE TO STOP IT--

--THERE MAY BE
ANOTHER WAY--

--WE'VE SUSPECTED
THE EXISTENCE OF OTHER
SENTIENT BEINGS SINCE THE
NOSTROMO MISSION. IT DOESN'T
CHANGE THINGS.

THE ALIENS HAVE
NOW, CORPORAL. BASIC
MILITARY TACTICS--WHEN YOU'RE
OUTGUNNED, YOU RETREAT--AND
LEAVE NOTHING FOR
YOUR ENEMY.

JESUS--HAVEN'T
YOU HEARD ANYTHING
I'VE SAID? THERE'S
STILL A CHANCE IF
YOU'LL DEAL
WITH THE--

TH-THEY
DON'T WANT TO
STOP IT.

WHAT--?

IT'S ONLY A
MATTER OF TIME BEFORE
THE ALIENS OVERRUN US--
WE'VE GOT TO DEAL WITH
THE REALITY OF THE
SITUATION--

ORONA
UNDERSTOOD.
THE ALIEN ATTACK
ISN'T EVIL. IT'S
OPPORTUNITY--

--EARTH'S BEEN ON THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION FOR DECADES. THERE'S NO DISCIPLINE--NO ORDER.

"THE ALIENS ONLY EXACERBATED THE SITUATION. IT WOULD HAVE COME TO THIS SOONER OR LATER.

"IT'S A CHANCE TO CLEAN THE SLATE-- A CHANCE TO START AGAIN--

"AFTER A FEW YEARS--WHEN IT'S OVER-- THE SURVIVORS CAN RETURN AND TERRAFORM EARTH INTO SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL AGAIN--

"ORONA UNDERSTOOD-- THE ALIENS HAVE GIVEN US A CHANCE TO REDISCOVER OURSELVES--

"IT'S A GOOD THING."

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE AM, I LAUGHED. I LAUGHED BECAUSE WORDS HAD LOST THEIR MEANING-- BECAUSE THAT SON OF A BITCH ORONA HAD BEEN RIGHT--

--THE ALIENS DIDN'T DESTROY US--

--WE DID.

SIR--THERE'S BEEN A BREACH OF THE SOUTHERN PERIMETER. OUR SPOTTERS HAVE SEEN HUNDREDS OF THE--

LOCK DOWN THE SHIPS AND PREPARE FOR LAUNCH. IT'S TIME.

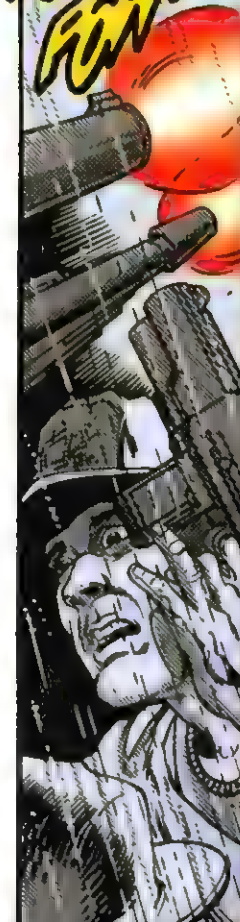
AND WHAT ABOUT US--?

YOU DID WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS RIGHT. THE TIME FOR MILITARY PROTOCOL AND POLITE INQUIRIES ARE LONG PAST--

--YOU'RE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE STILL ON EARTH. UNNECESSARY.

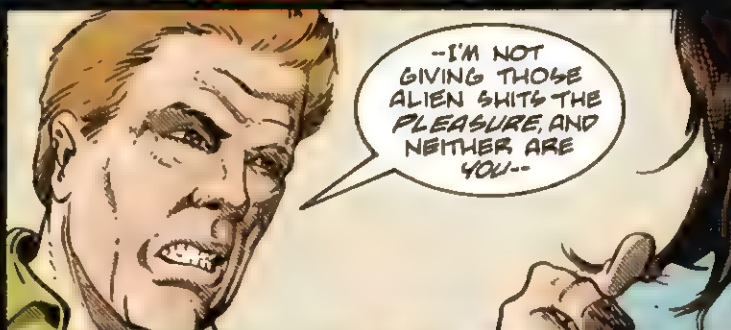


--BACK AWAY--
REPORT TO THE PAD
FOR LAUNCH--!



UNNECESSARY
MY ASS.

JUST LET
IT END. THE
WAY IT SHOULD
HAVE ENDED
ON RIM--
FOR BOTH
OF US--



--I'M NOT
GIVING THOSE
ALIEN SHIT THE
PLEASURE, AND
NEITHER ARE
YOU--



I SMOGGLED YOU
ABOARD THE BENEDICT--
AND IF I'VE LEARNED ONE
THING ABOUT THE MILITARY
IT'S THIS--

THEY
NEVER
LEARN--

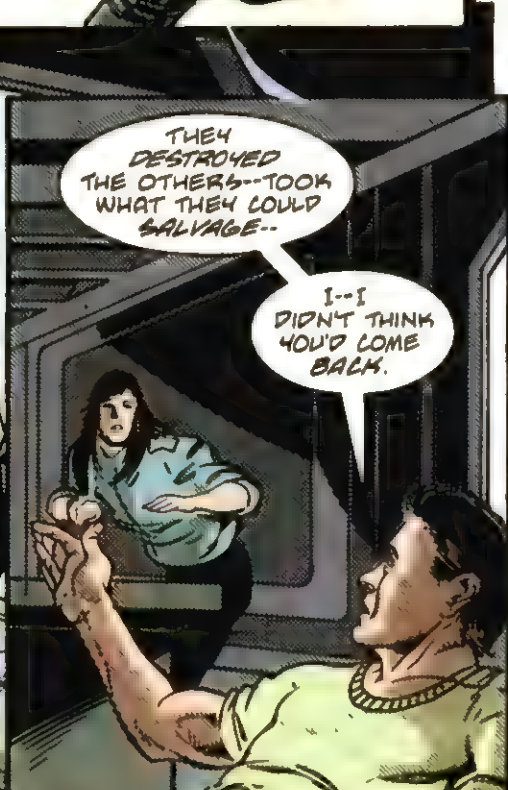
WAIT--!



WE DON'T
HAVE TIME FOR
THIS, BILLIE--

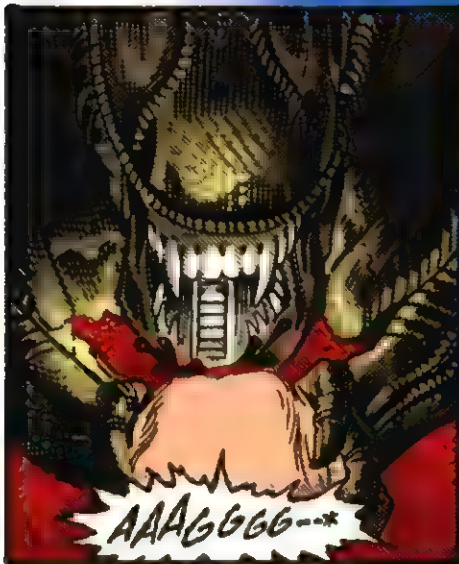
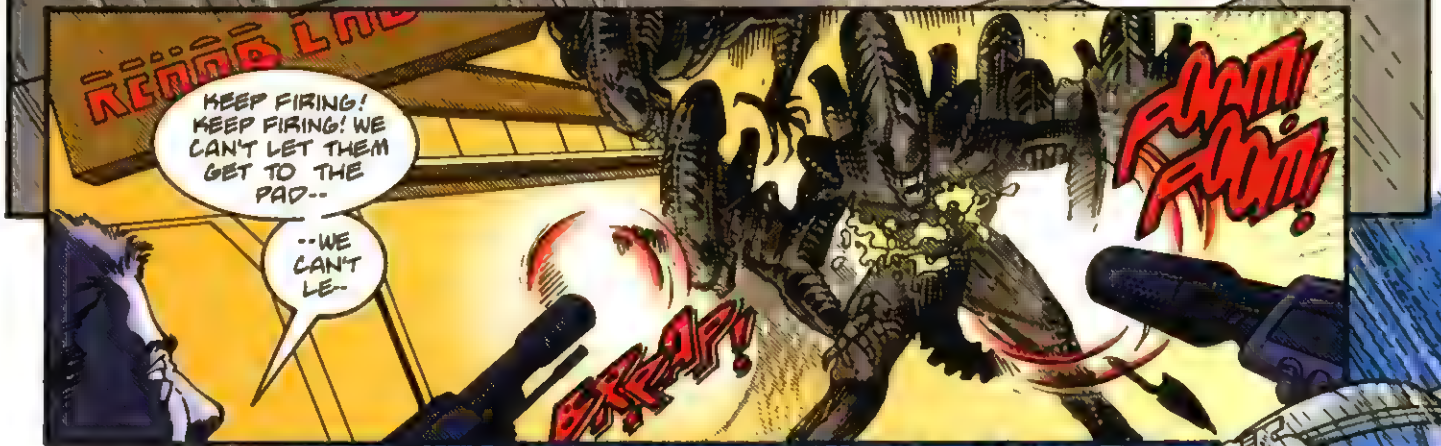
THIS IS
WHERE THEY TOOK
BUELLER--!

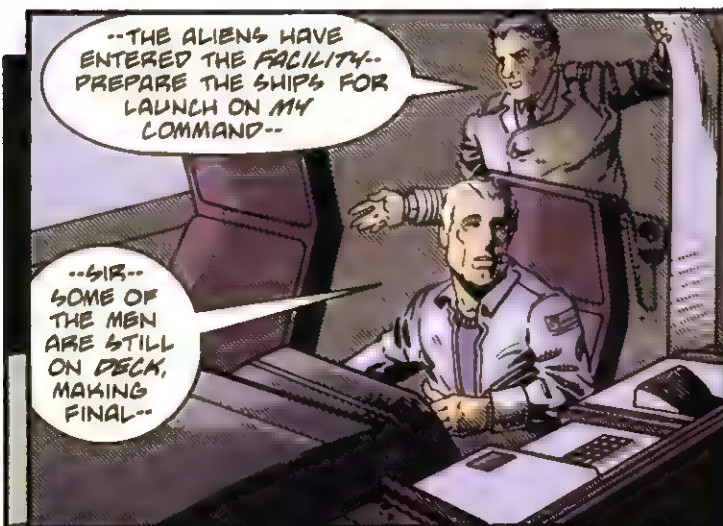
OH GOD--
WHAT HAVE
THEY
DONE--?



THEY
DESTROYED
THE OTHERS--TOOK
WHAT THEY COULD
SALVAGE--

I--I
DIDN'T THINK
YOU'D COME
BACK.





--THE ALIENS HAVE ENTERED THE FACILITY--
PREPARE THE SHIPS FOR
LAUNCH ON MY
COMMAND--

--SIR--
SOME OF
THE MEN
ARE STILL
ON DECK,
MAKING
FINAL--



--I'M PROUD
OF EVERY ONE OF
THEM. NOW PREPARE
FOR LAUNCH OR
I'LL HAVE YOU
SHOT.



I COULD HEAR GUNFIRE
AND SCREAMS AS THE
ALIENS ADVANCED ON
OUR SHIP. THE SOUNDS
OF A PLANET DYING.

THE AUTOMATIC LAUNCH SEQUENCERS
LOCKED AND THE WHINE OF THE
SHIP'S ENGINES DROWNED OUT THE
HORROR BELOW.



WE WERE LEAVING EARTH
TO THE ALIENS AND
ORONA'S "OPPORTUNITY"--

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HAVE CRIED--
FELT SOMETHING FOR THOSE WE
LEFT BEHIND--BUT I'D RUN OUT
OF TEARS LONG AGO--

--AND THEN IT SPOKE TO ME--

--SOMETHING EXPLODED-- BRIGHT,
LIKE A MILLION SUNS--

I--

CAN--

SEE--

BILLIE--
WHAT'S WRONG--?

IT--IT HAD CHANGED SINCE THE HOMEWORLD. IT
TOOK ME A MOMENT TO FULLY COMPREHEND--

AGGH--

IT UNDERSTOOD ABOUT ORONA--
IT KNEW HIS TWISTED PLAN--

WE THOUGHT IT SHARED OUR THIRST
FOR VENGEANCE. WE LED IT TO EARTH
IN THE MISTAKEN BELIEF IT MIGHT
WANT TO "HELP" US.

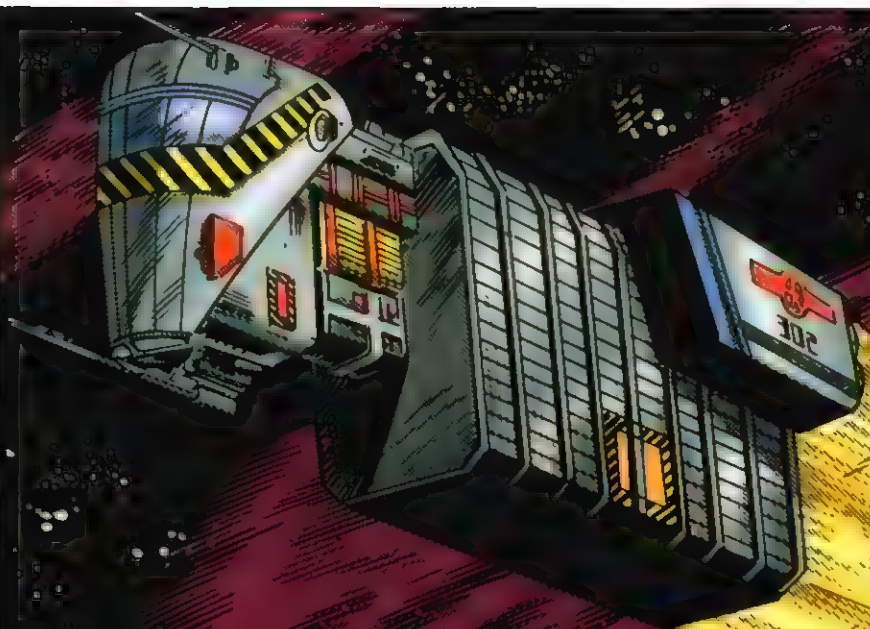
HOW COULD WE HAVE BEEN SO
BLIND? IT SHARED SO MANY
OF OUR MERLURIAL HUMAN
EMOTIONS. HATE. ANGER.

THE DESIRE
TO CONQUER.

IT NO LONGER CARED
ABOUT THE ALIENS.
INTEREST HAD SHIFTED.
THE SOLDIERS
ASSUMED THEY WOULD
RETURN ONE DAY AND
TERRAFORM EARTH
FOR THEMSELVES..

IT WOULD WATCH. IT WOULD
BE WAITING FOR THEM.

IT JUST WANTED
ME TO KNOW.



THE CARGO VESSEL'S NAVIGATIONAL COMPUTERS WERE LOCKED ONTO A DEEP SPACE TRAJECTORY. THE GRAVITY DRIVE PULSED LIKE A LIVING THING, PROPELLING US ACROSS BILLIONS OF MILES OF SPACE.



WILKS FINALLY HAD HIS REVENGE, BUT HE FOUND NO SATISFACTION IN IT.

WHEN IT BEGAN, HE BLAMED HIS MISERY ON THE ALIENS. NOW ALL HE COULD BLAME WAS HIMSELF.



I WAS STANDING AT ONE OF THE VIEWPORTS, STARING INTO SPACE. THE LIGHT FROM THE STARS STRETCHED AROUND THE SHIP LIKE GLOWING WHITE NEON--

--BUT THIS TIME IT WAS DIFFERENT.



I WASN'T ALONE ANYMORE-- AND MAYBE, FINALLY, THAT WAS ALL THAT MATTERED.

NIGHTMARE ASYLUM



script

MARK VERHEIDEN

art

DEN BEAUVAIS

lettering

WILLIE SCHUBERT

title illustration

DEN BEAUVAIS



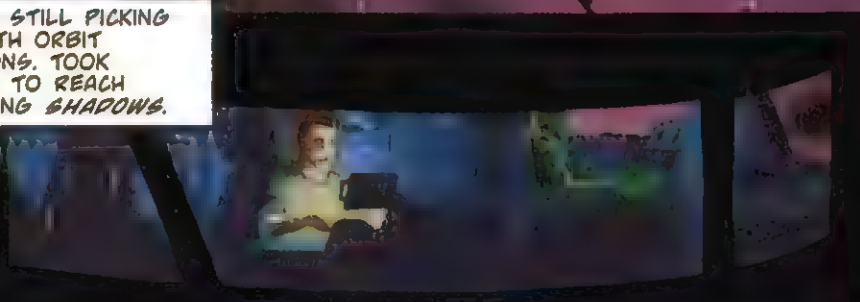


IN SPACE, YOU BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUE NATURE OF IMMORTALITY.

OUT HERE, SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL CONCERNS SEEM TRIVIAL--INSIGNIFICANT.

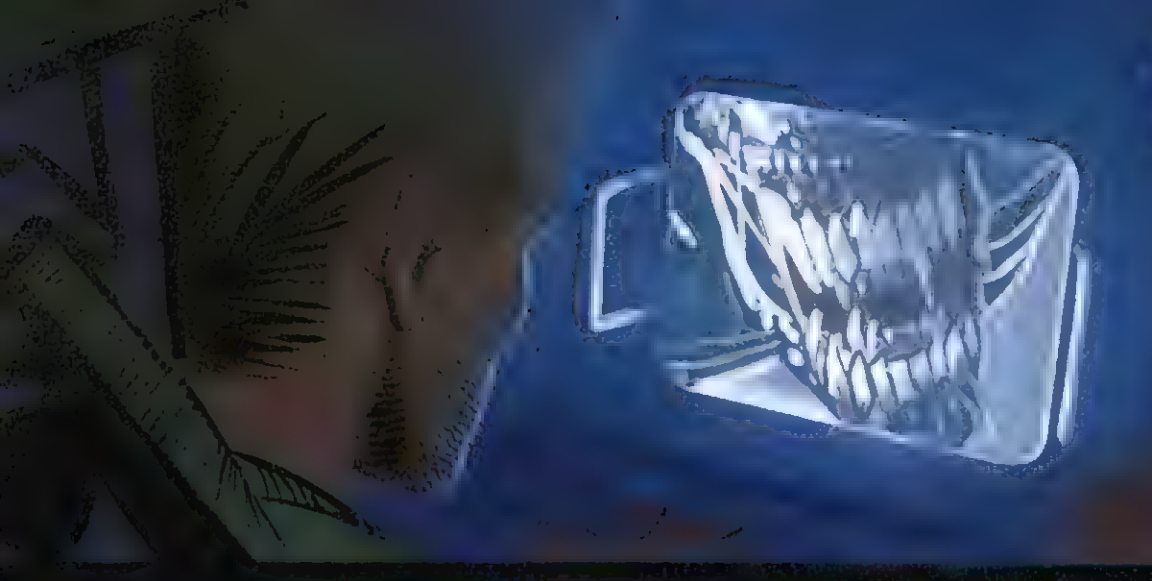
WE'RE FOURTEEN--NO, FIFTEEN DAYS OUT FROM EARTH. IT MIGHT AS WELL BE YEARS.

THE MAIN ANTENNA WAS STILL PICKING UP FRAGMENTS OF EARTH ORBIT SATELLITE TRANSMISSIONS. TOOK DAYS FOR THE SIGNALS TO REACH US--IT WAS LIKE WATCHING SHADOWS.



MOSTLY PRERECORDS--DIGITAL CHIPS, MAG CARTS--BUT OCCASIONALLY WE'D GET SOMETHING LIVE OFF THE BOUNCE.





THE IMAGES BURN LIKE
FIRE--BUT THEY'RE ALL
I'VE GOT LEFT.



HAVE WE GOT
THE LINK? HAVE
WE GOT--YEAH,
YEAH, DO IT!

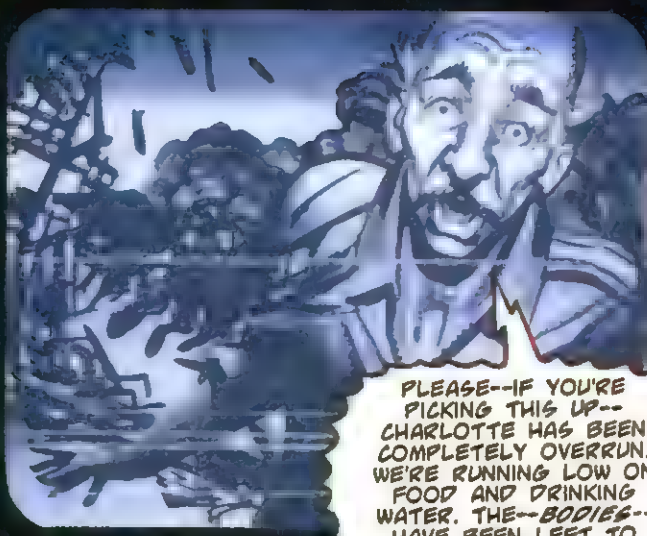
THERE WAS NO REASON
OR *PATTERN* TO THE
TRANSMISSIONS. WHAT-
EVER WE PICKED UP
CAME IN THROUGH
SHEER CHANCE.



THESE LAST, DESPERATE
SIGNALS WOULD TRAVEL
FOREVER, INTO THE FAR
REACHES OF SPACE--
RANDOM, ELECTRONIC
BITS OF HUMAN REALITY,
PRESERVED FOR ETERNITY.



--WSSSSKKK--
THANK YOU, LORD--
THANK YOU, LORD--
THANK YOU, LORD--
THANK YOU, LORD--
THANK YOU--



PLEASE--IF YOU'RE
PICKING THIS UP--
CHARLOTTE HAS BEEN
COMPLETELY OVERRUN.
WE'RE RUNNING LOW ON
FOOD AND DRINKING
WATER. THE--BODIES--
HAVE BEEN LEFT TO
ROT--DISEASE IS--

THERE WAS A STRANGE, ALMOST SPIRITUAL IRONY TO IT ALL.

THROUGH OUR MACHINES, EVEN MANKIND'S DESTRUCTION WOULD ENDURE IN A PERVERSE SORT OF IMMORTALITY.

AS TIME PASSED, LIVE TRANSMISSIONS WERE LESS FREQUENT. WHAT REMAINED WERE STATIC IMAGES GENERATED FROM AUTOMATIC SOURCES.

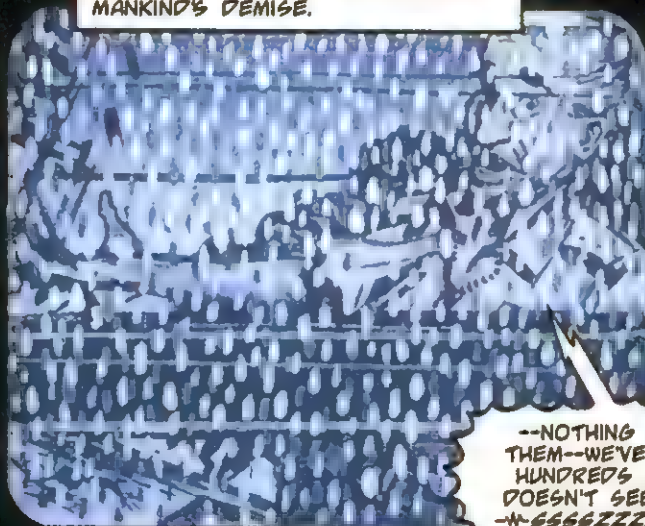


MY GOD--WE WERE A SPECIES IN LOVE WITH OUR DECEITS. CLANDESTINE MONITORING DEVICES WHIRLED ON WITHOUT FUNCTION, BLANDLY RECORDING MANKIND'S DEMISE.



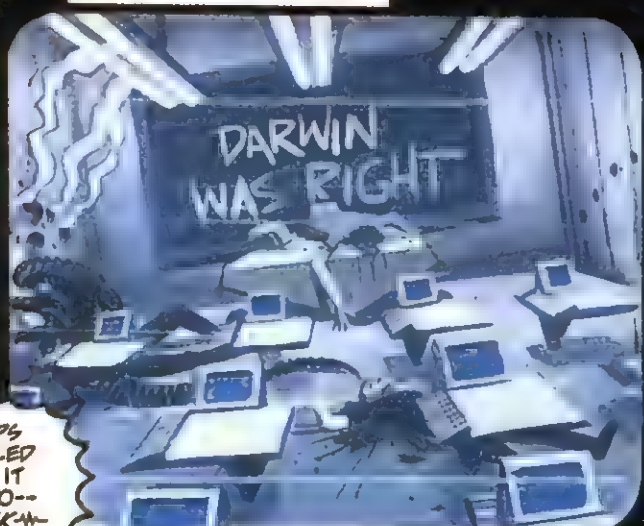
--LORD, THANK YOU, LORD, THANK YYYAAAGGH--!

I WAS ASTONISHED BY THEIR SHEER NUMBER.



--NOTHING STOPS THEM--WE'VE KILLED HUNDREDS AND IT DOESN'T SEEM TO--
--SSSSZZZZKKK--

ALL THIS TECHNOLOGY, AND FOR WHAT POSSIBLE REASON? WHO WAS WATCHING?



EXPLANATIONS WERE LOST IN THE DEVASTATION.

WHEN THE AUTOMATIC SIGNALS STOPPED, I KNEW IT WAS OVER.

JESUS CHRIST. WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED THE FIRST TIME I WAS WITH HIM. EVERYTHING WAS SO--PERFECT.

WE'VE COME OUT OF GRAVITY DRIVE, BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THAT MEANS. THERE'S NO WAY INTO THE NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEM WITHOUT THE ACCESS CODE.

WHAT THE HELL KIND OF SHIP IS THIS?

SKIN--HAIR--MUSCULATURE--ALL OF IT METICULOUSLY DESIGNED AND SYNTHESIZED.

I CAN INITIATE SHORT TEST BURNS IN THE THRUSTERS, BUT THE COMPUTER AUTOMATICALLY COMPENSATES FOR COURSE AND TRAJECTORY. WE'RE JUST ALONG FOR THE RIDE.

IT'S ALL RIGHT...

NO--IT'S NOT ALL RIGHT. WE DON'T KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING--HOW LONG IT'S GOING TO TAKE--

GOD, I LOVE YOU SO MU--

I COULD IMAGINE HIS DESIGNER RELAXING BEHIND A GENETIC SCHEMATIC, ADDING AND SUBTRACTING FEATURES WITH THE ARBITRARY TWIST OF A DIAL.

DON'T-- PLEASE, BILLIE-- DON'T...

I--I'M GOING TO TRY AND GET SOME REST--

BILLIE-- BILLIE, I'M SORRY!

I STILL DON'T-- UNDERSTAND--EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED TO ME...

HE WAS AN ANDROID CONSTRUCT--A REPLICA. I THINK HE WAS AS SURPRISED AS ANYONE WAS TO LEARN THE TRUTH.

IT WAS ALMOST FUNNY. BUELLER WAS THE FIRST MAN WHO EVER LOVED ME--AND HE WASN'T A MAN AT ALL.



I HAD TO KEEP MY MIND
ON OUR SITUATION.
EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS
SHIP WAS *WRONG*.

PREPROGRAMMED NAVIGATION--
NO WEAPONS--CAPABLE OF
RECEIVING COMMUNICATIONS BUT
NOT TRANSMITTING--WHAT THE
HELL WERE THEY *DOING*?

THE ROOM STARTED TO GET
HOT. I COULD FEEL THE
SWEAT SLIDING DOWN MY
BACK, MOIST AND STICKY.



EVERYTHING
FRIGHTENS
YOU,
BILLIE.

WILKS--JESUS,
YOU FRIGHTENED
ME--

WHEN YOU WERE
LITTLE, YOU WERE
AFRAID OF DEATH.
LATER, YOU
WERE AFRAID
OF LIVING.



WHAT'S *WRONG*
WITH YOU? WHAT
ARE YOU TALKING
ABOUT?

YOU'VE ALWAYS
BEEN AFRAID OF
ME.



PERHAPS YOU
PREFER THAT--THING--
ON THE FLIGHT DECK
TO SOMEONE--TRULY
HUMAN--

WHY ARE
YOU DOING
THIS?

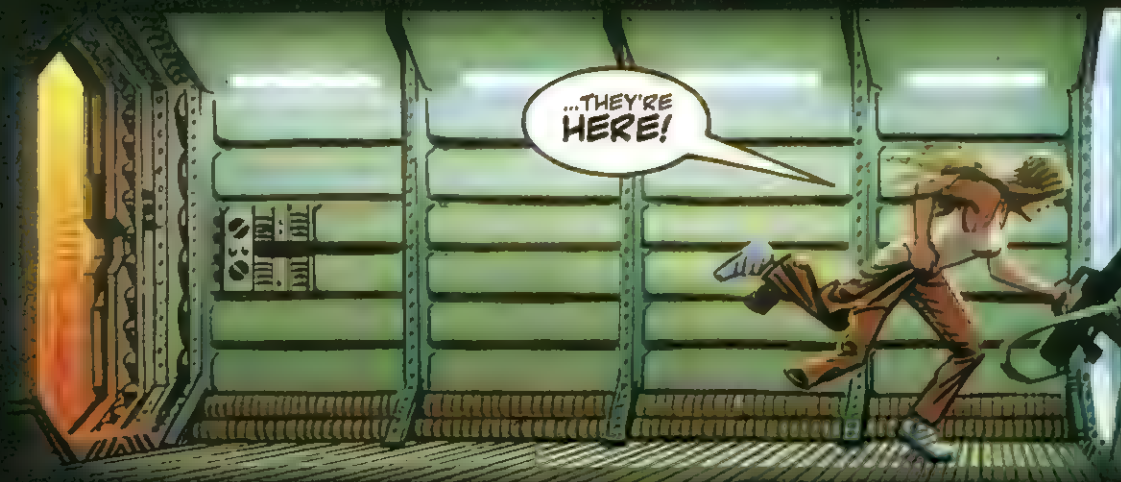
WHY IS THAT,
BILLIE? EXPLAIN
IT TO ME.

UNGGG--BECAUSE
I'M EVERYTHING YOU
FEAR--PASSION--
LOVE--

--HUMANITY!

WILKS!

OH,
MY GOD.
THE DREAMS
AGAIN...



...THEY'RE
HERE!

WILKS--THE
ALIENS--THEY'RE
ON BOARD!

CHRIST, BILLIE,
THEY'RE DEAD,
LIKE EARTH,
LIKE US.

MAYBE YOU'RE
BURNED OUT. MAYBE
YOU WANT TO
DIE--

--NOT ME!
NOT BY ONE
OF THOSE
THINGS!

THEY'RE
JUST BAD DREAMS,
BILLIE--WE'VE BEEN
IN SPACE FOR WEEKS.
WHY WOULD THEY
WAIT UNTIL
NOW?

I DON'T
KNOW. NOTHING
ABOUT THIS SHIP MAKES
ANY SENSE--BUT IT'S
MORE THAN JUST
DREAMS.

I--I CAN
FEEL THEM. THEY'RE
WAITING.

YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO LET IT
GO, ARE YOU?

ALL
RIGHT. YOU WANT
TO PLAY SOLDIER,
I'LL PLAY
SOLDIER.

WE'VE ONLY GOT
FIVE SHOTS LEFT. IF
THEY ARE ON BOARD,
IT'LL BE OVER SOON
ENOUGH.

THEY MUST
BE HERE.

WE'VE
BEEN THROUGH THIS,
BILLIE. THE CARGO PITS
ARE CODE BLOCKED LIKE
THE REST OF THE DAMN SHIP.
WE COULDN'T GET IN
IF WE WANTED
TO.

I THINK YOU
WANT TO FIND THEM--
LIKE THAT MIGHT MEAN
SOMETHING.

COMMUNICATIONS
BUNDLE. SOMETHING'S
TORN IT APART.

WHAT'S THAT
SMELL?

SOMETHING--
BURNING.

WHAT TH--
FIRE!

IT'S
IN THE CARGO
HOLD!

SMOKE
TRIGGERED
THE FIRE
SYSTEM.

IT'S BEEN
BURNED WITH
ACID!





COME
ON--WE HAVE TO GET
UP TO THE FLIGHT
DECK!



WE OUGHT TO
BE ABLE TO SEAL
OFF THE CARGO
AREA FROM THE MAIN
BOARD--THAT MIGHT
GIVE US TIME TO--



YOU
SON OF A
BITCH--!

MAYBE
WE BROUGHT IT ON
OURSELVES--MAYBE
THINGS LIKE YOU
REALLY ARE THE
NEXT EVOLUTIONARY
STEP--



--I JUST
DON'T GIVE A SHIT
ANYMORE!

YEEEEAAA--!

B-3

WILKS! IT'S BURNING THROUGH THE HULL!

DON'T LET IT TOUCH YOU--!

WILKS-- HURRY! WE HAVE TO CLEAR THE CARGO.

YEEEEAAA--!

B-3

WILKS! IT'S BURNING THROUGH THE HULL!

DON'T LET IT TOUCH YOU--!

WILKS-- HURRY! WE HAVE TO CLEAR THE CARGO.

YEEEEAAA--!

B-3

WILKS! IT'S BURNING THROUGH THE HULL!

DON'T LET IT TOUCH YOU--!

WILKS-- HURRY! WE HAVE TO CLEAR THE CARGO.

YEEEEAAA--!

B-3

WILKS! IT'S BURNING THROUGH THE HULL!

DON'T LET IT TOUCH YOU--!

WILKS-- HURRY! WE HAVE TO CLEAR THE CARGO.





OVERRIDE,
DAMMIT--

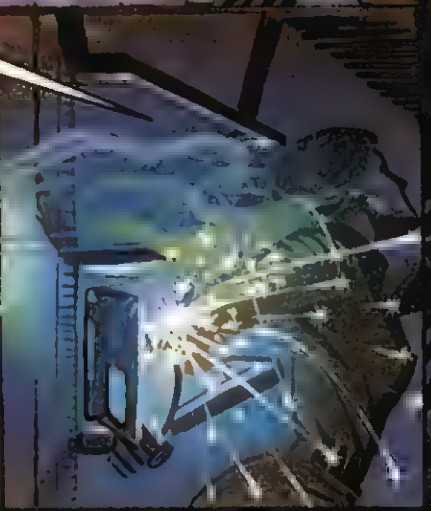


--COME
ON, COME ON,
COME ON!



AGGGHH--!

WILKS...
PULL...



WILKS!

COLD--SO
COLD--CA--CAN'T
CATCH--MY
BREATH--



NO--
TWO LEFT.

YOU KILLED
IT--IT'S OVER.



BILLIE--
WHAT THE HELL'S
GOING--

WE'VE GOT
COMPANY.

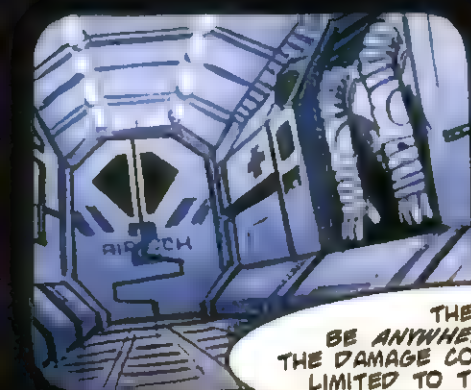
THANKS,
BILLIE! :COFF!

WHAT
HAPPENED TO
WILKS?

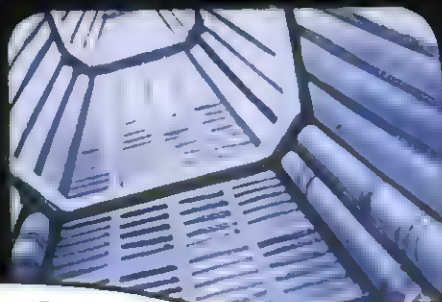
HE
GOT CAUGHT IN
VACUUM!

COFF!
INBOARD VIDEO SYSTEM
IS PRIMITIVE, BUT IT'S
ALL WE'VE GOT.

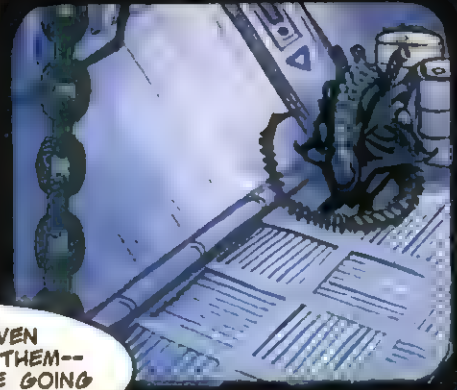
NO
MOTION SENSORS
OR INFRAREDS--WE'LL
HAVE TO FIND THEM
VISUALLY.



THEY COULD
BE ANYWHERE--HAK HAK!--
THE DAMAGE CONTROL CAMERAS ARE
LIMITED TO THE MAIN CREW AND
ENGINEERING AREAS--



--AND EVEN
IF WE FIND THEM--
WHAT ARE WE GOING
TO DO WITH--



--SON
OF A--

FIND
SOMETHING?





IT'S
CLEAR.

ENNUUGH!
STOMACH'S ON
FIRE--

YOU
WERE EXPOSED TO
OPEN SPACE--YOU'RE
SUFFERING FROM THE
BENDS--

--IT SHOULD
PASS WITH TIME,
BUT--

SHAKE--
THIS ISN'T
A MILITARY OPER-
ATION--IT'S A MILK
RUN--A DAMN
DELIVERY--

WHAT
KIND OF
MISSION WOULD
INVOLVE THOSE
THINGS?

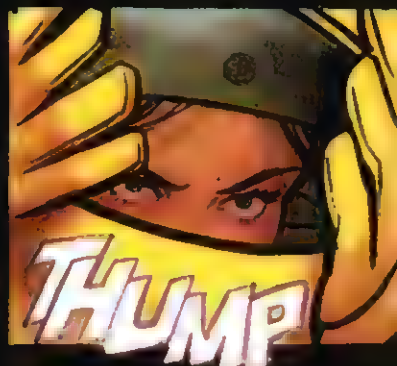
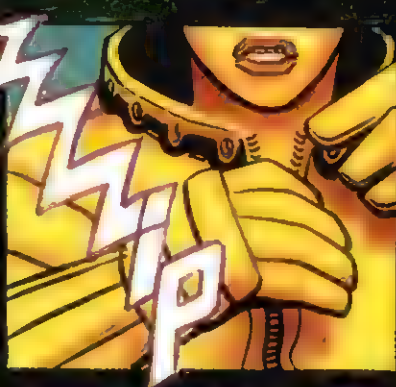
OH MY
GOD...THE
HULL!

DAMN IT, BILLIE--
YOU CAN'T GO OUT
THERE ALONE--

THEY'RE
STILL ALIVE. I
DON'T HAVE ANY
CHOICE.

WE'LL BE BLIND
IN HERE--THERE AREN'T
ANY EXTERNAL MONITORS.
YOU'LL HAVE RADIO
COMMUNICATION AND
THAT'S ALL--

I'LL FIND
THEM.



I COULD HEAR THE AIR HISsing
OUT OF THE CHAMBER. THE
FABRIC OF MY SUIT RIPPLED
AS THE PRESSURE DROPPED.

THE SILENCE WAS LOUD,
LIKE A SCREAM. I COULD
FEEL THEM OUTSIDE.

THEIR PATIENCE WAS THEIR
STRENGTH. HUMANS MEASURE TIME IN
MINUTES, SECONDS, MICROSECONDS.

TIME NEVER MATTERED TO
THE ALIEN. ONLY SURVIVAL.

GOD HELP ME. I WAS BEGINNING
TO UNDERSTAND THEM.





I'M CROSSING
OVER TOWARD THE
MAIN ANTENNA.

COPY. WE--
WILKS!

INGHHH--
I'M ALL RIGHT,
I'M ALL RIGHT,
DAMMIT.

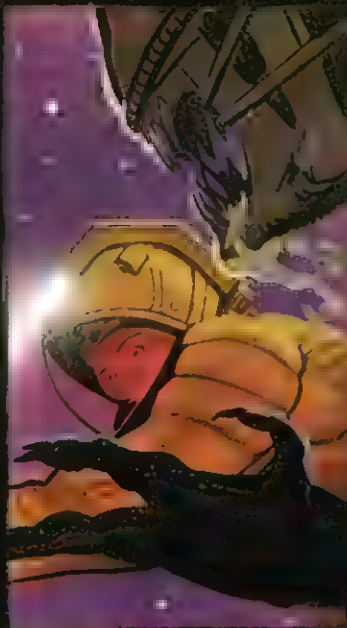
NOTHING
UNUSUAL YET--
IT'S HARD TO
SEE IN THE--

WAIT,
THERE...

...THEY WANT
IN.

I'M GOING
TO DOUBLE BACK
AND CHECK THE
REAR OF THE
SHIP--

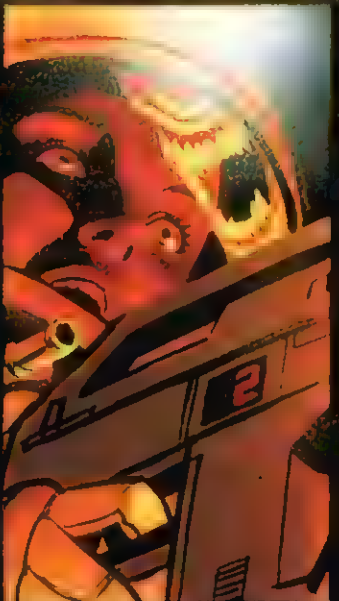
--IT MIGHT HAVE
TRIED TO GET IN
THROUGH ONE
OF THE--



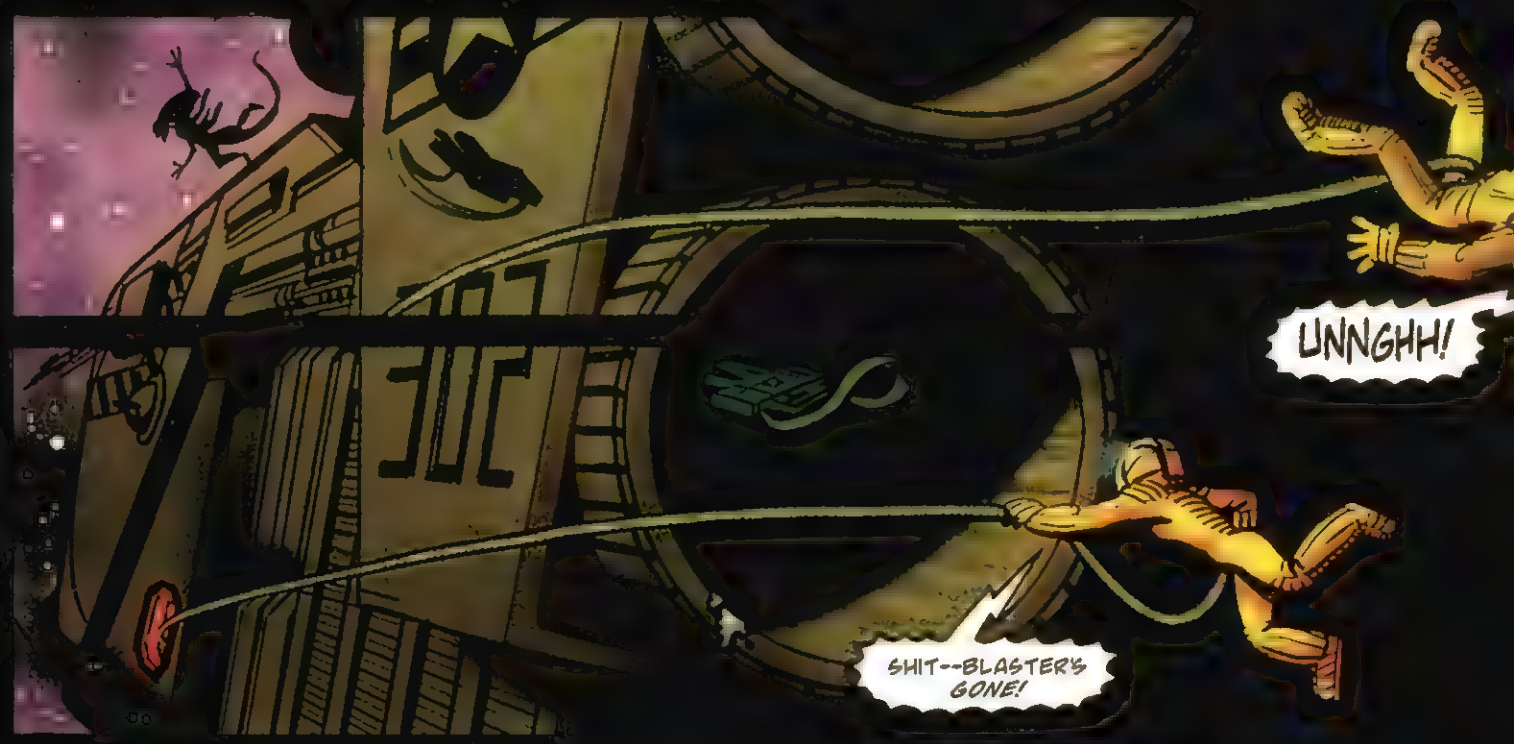
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!



**NO! NO!
NO!**



AAAAA--
RECOIL--
CAN'T GET
FOOTING--



UNNGHH!

SHIT--BLASTERS
GONE!



NO SIGN OF
THE OTHER--MAYBE
IT WAS BLOWN CLEAR
WHEN WILKS OPENED
THE--



OH,
GOD.

BILLIE--
WHERE IS
IT--?



INSIDE
THE REAR
THRUSTERS...

...IT'S BEEN
WAITING FOR
ME...

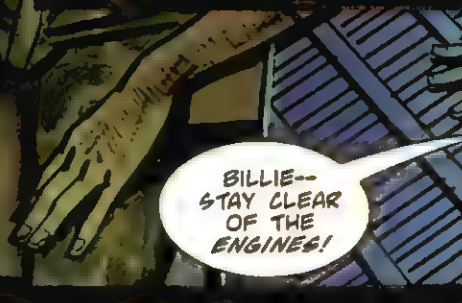


WILKS--WE CAN
ACCESS THE THRUSTERS
IF WE--

WILKS!



THE ALIEN SEEMED
TO HESITATE AND I
SENSED A MOMENT
OF--RECOGNITION.

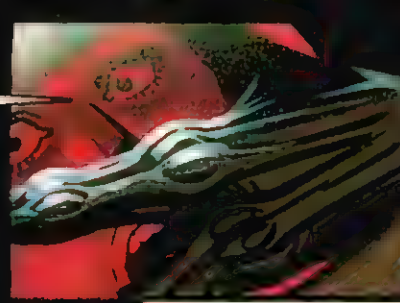


BILLIE--
STAY CLEAR
OF THE
ENGINES!



THE ALIEN ENJOYED AN ETHICAL
PURITY THAT TRANSCENDED
MORALITY. IT DIDN'T CONCERN
ITSELF WITH HUMAN CONCEPTS
OF GOOD AND EVIL--IT DIDN'T
HAVE TO.

HURRY,
BUELLER!



IT BORE NO MALICE WHEN
IT KILLED, AND THAT WAS
WHERE WE WERE DIFFERENT.

WARPIRE THRUST PACE

...IGNITION



IN THE BLACK VACUUM
OF SPACE, DEATH WAS
THE ONLY ABSOLUTE--



--SURVIVAL THE ONLY
IMPERATIVE--

--AND I TOOK PLEASURE
IN WATCHING IT BURN.

I'D ALWAYS TAKEN COMFORT IN WILKS' STRENGTH. IT WAS A SHOCK TO SEE HIM LIKE THIS. SO FRAIL--ALMOST DELICATE.

THIS TIME HE'D RECOVER. HE HADN'T ALWAYS BEEN SO LUCKY.

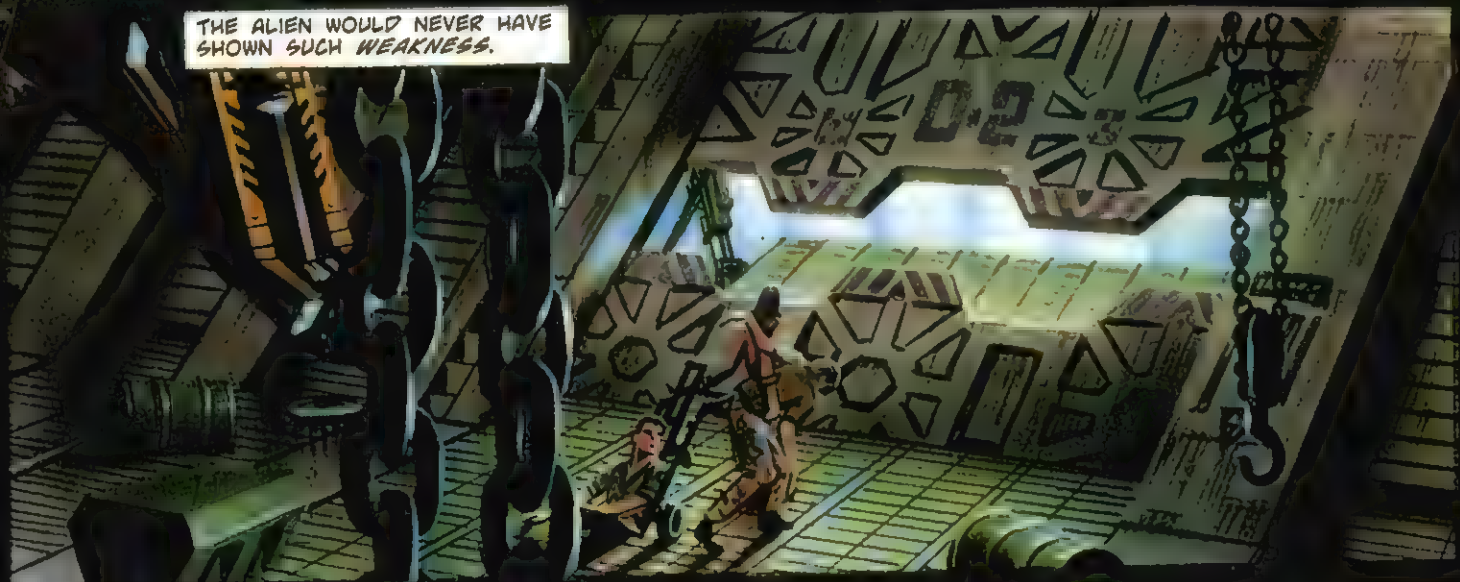
I TRIED TO REMEMBER HOW HE LOOKED BEFORE, BUT IT HAD BEEN SO LONG, WE'D BOTH LOST SO MUCH TO THE ALIEN.

WE BEGAN TO PICK UP CODED SIGNALS OVER THE RESTRICTED MILITARY CHANNELS AND REALIZED WE WERE NEARING OUR FINAL DESTINATION.

I WANTED THE NIGHTMARE TO BE OVER.

MAYBE THAT WAS MY MISTAKE. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE IT STARTED, I'D LET MYSELF HOPE.

THE ALIEN WOULD NEVER HAVE SHOWN SUCH WEAKNESS.



MAXWELL, DOWLING--
GET DOWN TO THIS CARGO
HOLD AND SEE WHAT YOU
CAN SALVAGE.



YOU
BASTARDS.
IF YOU'VE DAMAGED
MY SPECIMENS,
I'LL SEE YOU
HANG.



WHAT THE--

DUMP THE INBOARD NAVIGATIONAL FILES INTO THE BASE SYSTEM--I WANT A TIME-CODED HARD COPY OF THE FLIGHT LOG IN FIFTEEN MINUTES.

COF--THOSE THINGS ATTACKED US--

WE WERE LUCKY TO SURVIVE--

THAT'S NOT LUCK--THAT'S SEDITION!

LOG ON.
EYES ONLY.
(OVERRIDE CLEARANCE
AIR REQUIRED)
MAJOR EUGENE POWELL,
U.S.C.M.C.

IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS, I HAVE OPENED A DAILY LOG TO SUMMARIZE MY ASSESSMENT OF BASE COMMANDER SPEAR'S FITNESS FOR DUTY.

MY RED PEOPLE NEEDED THOSE SPECIMENS--IT WAS A CHANCE TO STUDY POSSIBLE MUTATIONS BROUGHT ON BY THE CREATURES' EXPOSURE TO MULTIPLE HUMAN STRAINS.

PUT THEM INTO ISOLATION--SUBCUTANEOUS MONITORS AND FULL-PRISM SPECTOGRAPHY--

IF THEY'RE INFECTED, WE MAY SALVAGE SOMETHING FROM THIS MISSION YET.

JESUS--DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? EARTH'S GONE--

I REALIZE THESE NOTES COULD BE CONSTRUED AS MUTINOUS--EVEN TRAITOROUS--

BUT IT HAS FALLEN TO ME TO KEEP SOME SORT OF RECORD.

YOU THINK YOU CAN CONTROL THEM? THAT'S WHAT THE OTHERS BELIEVED--

THAT'S WHAT THOSE THINGS DEPEND ON!



60

AT 0800 HOURS I RELIEVED LT. BRIMBRIDGE AND TOOK OVER A DUTY OFFICER IN THE MIND HABITAT. I OBSERVED GENERAL SPEARS ALONE, NEAR ONE OF THE CONTAINMENT VESSELS.

HE SEEMED TO BE WATCHING THEM.

AT 1023 HOURS, I OVERHEARD THE GENERAL MUTTER SOMETHING UNDER HIS BREATH. HE WAS SMILING AS HE SAID IT, REPEATING HIMSELF SEVERAL TIMES.

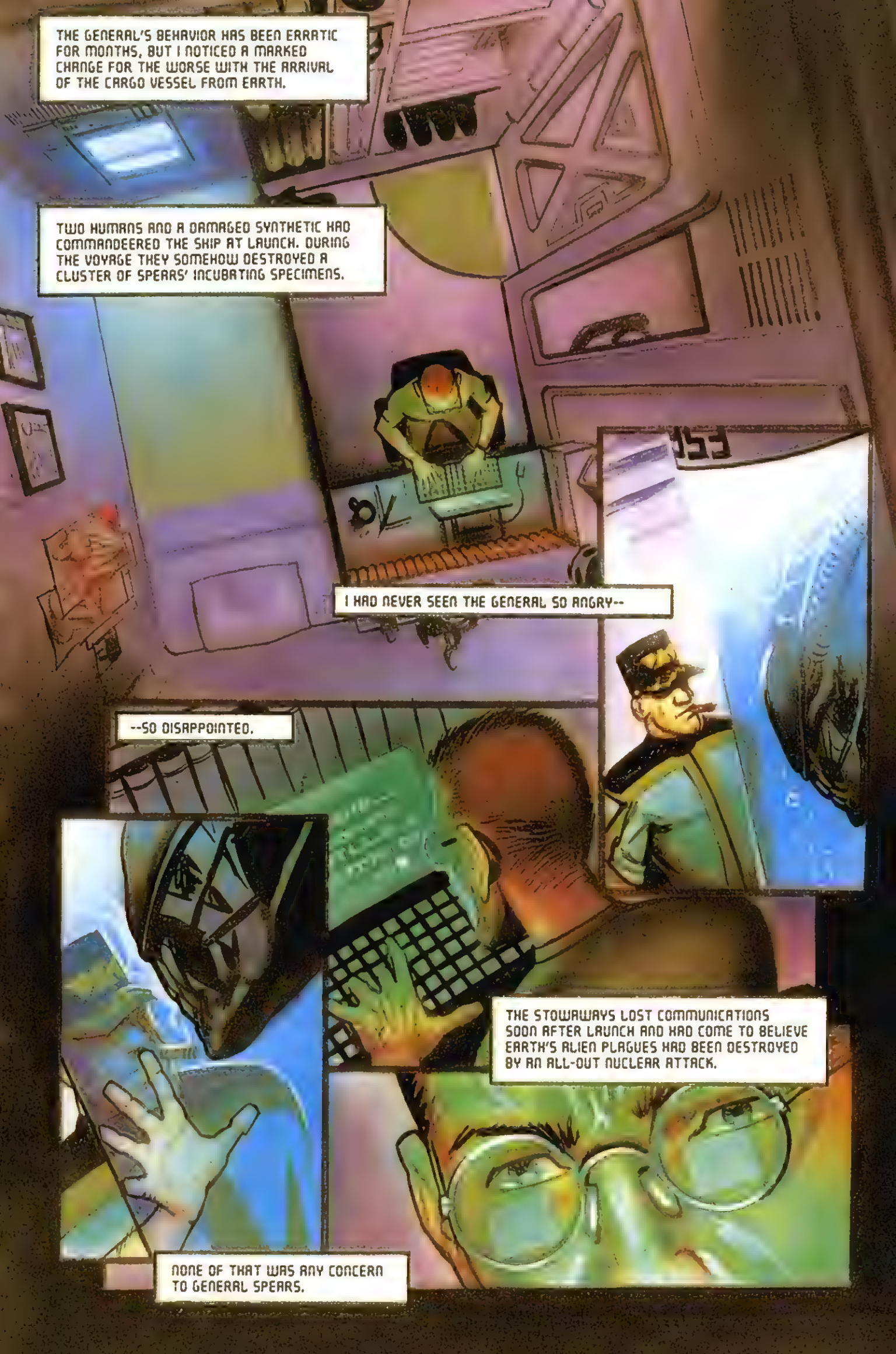


PERFECTION--

PERFECTION--

PERFECTION.





THE GENERAL'S BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN ERRATIC FOR MONTHS, BUT I NOTICED A MARKED CHANGE FOR THE WORSE WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE CARGO VESSEL FROM EARTH.

TWO HUMANS AND A DAMAGED SYNTHETIC HAD COMMANDEERED THE SHIP AT LAUNCH. DURING THE VOYAGE THEY SOMEHOW DESTROYED A CLUSTER OF SPEARS' INCUBATING SPECIMENS.

I HAD NEVER SEEN THE GENERAL SO ANGRY--

--SO DISAPPOINTED.

THE STOWAWAYS LOST COMMUNICATIONS SOON AFTER LAUNCH AND HAD COME TO BELIEVE EARTH'S ALIEN PLAGUES HAD BEEN DESTROYED BY AN ALL-OUT NUCLEAR ATTACK.

NONE OF THAT WAS ANY CONCERN TO GENERAL SPEARS.



YOU--
COFF--YOU
DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
DEALING
WITH. JESUS,
YOU'VE GOT
TO LISTEN
TO ME--

SOUNDS
LIKE THE
OLD MAN'S
HEARD
ENOUGH--

I--I'M
AFRAID, DADDY.
THE MONSTERS
MIGHT HEAR US--
THEY MIGHT TRY
TO HURT US,
LIKE THEY HURT
RICKY AND--



KEEP
MOVING--

19F
EARTH SAT

5B
EARTH SAT



EARTH-
SAT--?

SPEAR'S
TECHIES HAVE
BEEN MONITORING
THE CIVILIAN
SATELLITES SINCE
WE ESTABLISHED
THE BASE--

WHAT
THE HELL
KEEPS THEM
OFF HARD
DUTY--

THAT'S
IMPOSSIBLE---!
WE LOST
CONTACT
WITH EARTH
DURING--



WHAT THE HELL--
HARKER, GRAB THE
GIRL--

DON'T
LEAVE
ME,
DADDY--
PLEASE!

21:53... 19

20C
EARTH SAT



WHY ARE THEY
DOING THIS?
THEY DIDN'T EVEN
TALK TO US--
FIND OUT WHAT
HAPPENED--

THEY'RE
PRETENDING ALL
THEIR MILITARY
BULLSHIT STILL
MATTERS.

ÈKAK KAKE
I'VE KNOWN DOZENS
OF OFFICERS LIKE
SPEARS--THEY FIGURE
THEIR RANK IS
PROOF OF SOME
DIVINE
PURPOSE.

HIS MEN--
THE TRUTH--
NONE OF THAT
COUNTS FOR SHIT.
JUST POWER,
'COMMAND'--

HE HAS
THAT LOOK IN
HIS EYES--LIKE
HE'S INVULNERABLE,
IMMORTAL. LIFE,
DEATH--IT'S ALL
MEANINGLESS.

IT'S THE
SAME FEELING
I GET WHEN I SEE
ONE OF THOSE
THINGS.

THE GENERAL'S OBSESSION WITH THE ALIEN
HAS CLOUDED HIS REASON. HE ANSWERS TO
NO AUTHORITY BUT HIS OWN.

THE PRISONERS COULD HAVE PROVIDED
IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT EARTH
--ABOUT OUR FUTURE. INSTEAD, SPEARS
HAS QUARANTINED THEM FOR USE AS
ALIEN BREEDING STOCK.



I'VE SEEN ENOUGH KILLING
--IT HAS TO STOP.
THE GENERAL HAS HIS
LOYALISTS, BUT IT'S ONLY A
MATTER OF TIME BEFORE
THERE IS OPEN REBELLION.

AND GOD HELP US
WHEN IT STARTS...
LOG OFF.

SEC: 16.28



HOW MUCH DID YOU GET?

THREE DAYS' WORTH. SPEARS HAS BINDING TALLIES ON PERISHABLES BUT I MADE A DEAL WITH ONE OF THE SECOND LEVEL SUPPLY OFFICERS.

I'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET OFF THIS ROCK--

OKAY, LET'S GO.

I FIGURE WE'VE GOT A FEW HOURS' GRACE WHILE SPEARS AND POWELL PLAY MAD DOCTOR WITH THE NEW ARRIVALS. IF WE CAN CLEAR THE SCOPES, WE MAY BE ABLE TO CONTACT THE CIVILIAN TERRAFORMING COLONY.

THEN SPEARS WILL FIND US.

WE DON'T WANT THAT.

AND WHAT IF THE CIVILIANS DON'T FEEL LIKE TALKING?

HEY, RENUS-- COMING TO KEEP ME COMPANY?

FIGURES THEY'D LET IT GO RED BEFORE BRINGING ME UP. GIVE ME A SECOND TO PUNCH UP THE WATCH COMMANDER AND--

BETTER-- I'M RELIEVING YOU. SERGEANT DECKER WANTS YOU TO CHECK THE CIRCULATION PUMPS ON D LEVEL-- WE'RE SHOWING RED ON THREE CHAMBERS.

SORRY, BOBBY.

PETERSON, GET THE DOOR.



CAN'T
BREAK IT.
SECURITY
SEALS ALL
AROUND.

SHIT.

ALL RIGHT.
DOESN'T
MATTER--WE'RE
COMMITTED.
SECURITY SWEEPS
THE PERIMETER
EVERY FOUR
HOURS--WE'RE
CLEAR UNTIL
THEN--



I DON'T
CARE IF WE
HAVE FOUR
SECONDS--
ANYTHING'S
BETTER THAN
FACING THOSE
THINGS.

SET.

BURN
IT.



CHRIST,
PETERSON,
FORGET THE
TRACTOR--GO FOR
ONE OF THE
SPEEDERS--

TOO
DANGEROUS. LOW-
LEVEL RADAR
WOULD CLICK US
BEFORE WE WERE
TEN FEET OFF THE
GROUND.

GIVE ME
A MINUTE TO
TRASH THE
INBOARD
ALARMS.



I'VE BEEN
THINKING, MAN.
EVEN IF WE MAKE
IT TO THE
TERRAFORMING
COLONY, WHAT IF
SPEARS--



FORGET
SPEARS.
WE'LL
MAKE
IT--

--WE'VE
GOT
TO.



MAJOR POWELL--?

GAAHH--
UH--

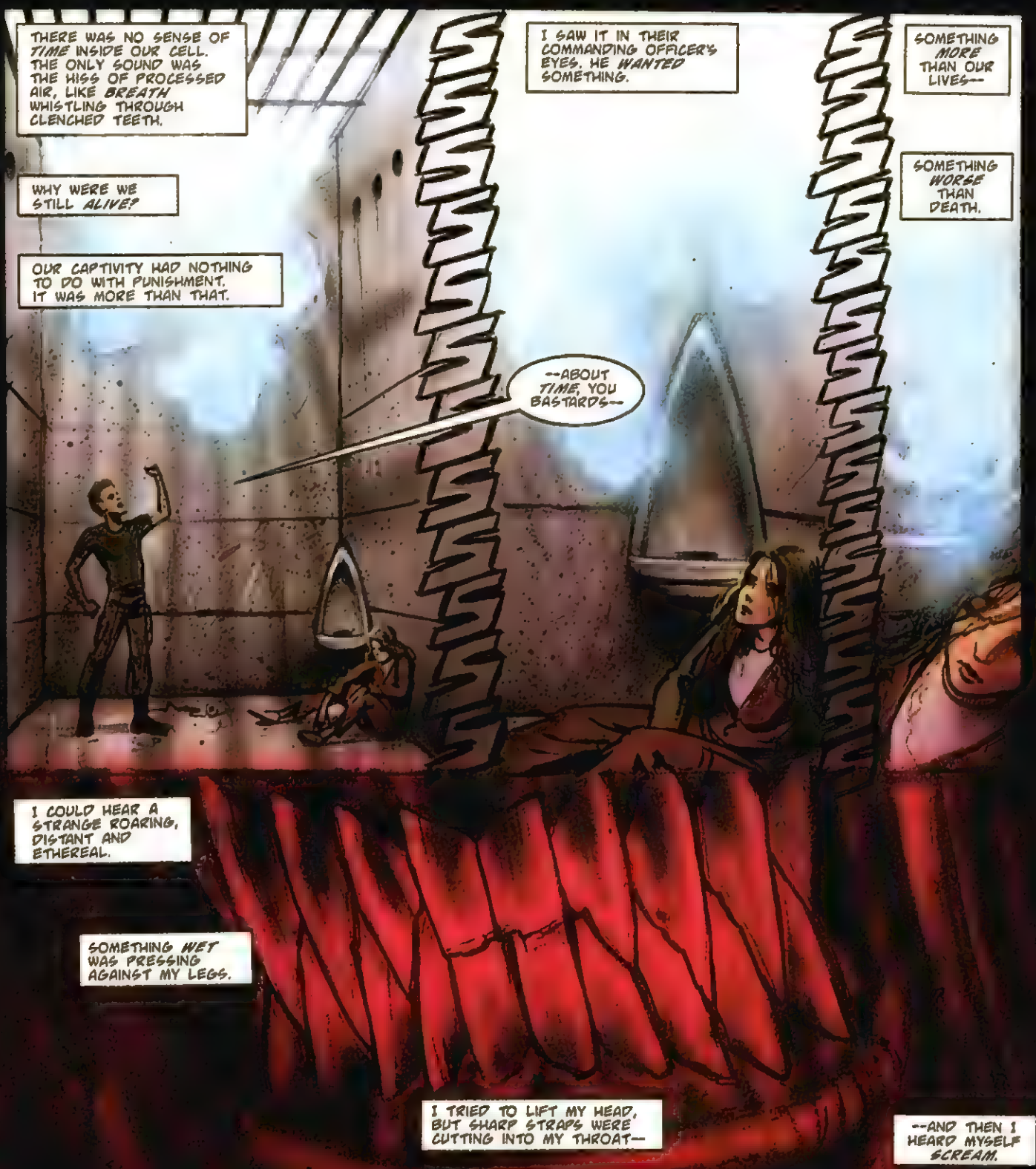
WHAT
TIME IS
IT--?

EARLY. YOU
ASKED ME TO
WAKE YOU IF I
PULLED AN ID ON
EITHER OF THE
NEW ARRIVALS.



THE
GIRL'S STILL
A MYSTERY, BUT
THE MALE IS
LONG-TIME
MILITARY. I FOUND
A PARTIAL FILE
ON ONE OF THE
OLDER PRINT
DISCS--

JESUS--
HAS SPEARS
SEEN
THIS?



THERE WAS NO SENSE OF
TIME INSIDE OUR CELL.
THE ONLY SOUND WAS
THE HISS OF PROCESSED
AIR, LIKE BREATH
WHISTLING THROUGH
CLENCHED TEETH.

WHY WERE WE
STILL ALIVE?

OUR CAPTIVITY HAD NOTHING
TO DO WITH PUNISHMENT.
IT WAS MORE THAN THAT.

I SAW IT IN THEIR
COMMANDING OFFICER'S
EYES. HE WANTED
SOMETHING.

SOMETHING
MORE
THAN OUR
LIVES--

SOMETHING
WORSE
THAN
DEATH.

--ABOUT
TIME, YOU
BASTARDS--

I COULD HEAR A
STRANGE ROARING,
DISTANT AND
ETHEREAL.

SOMETHING WET
WAS PRESSING
AGAINST MY LEGS.

I TRIED TO LIFT MY HEAD,
BUT SHARP STRAPS WERE
CUTTING INTO MY THROAT--

--AND THEN I
HEARD MYSELF
SCREAM.





THEY
NEEDED
SPECIMENS.

SHE
NEEDED
ME.

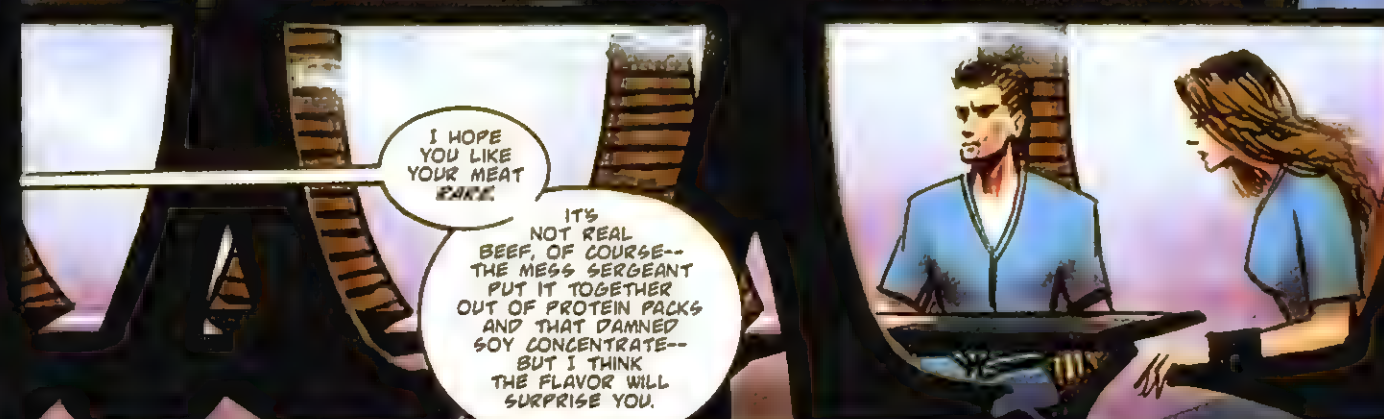


NOOO!!!

GET
IT
OFF
ME!



BILLIE--
BILLIE--IT'S
ALL RIGHT. I'M
HERE.



I HOPE
YOU LIKE
YOUR MEAT
EARE.

IT'S
NOT REAL
BEEF, OF COURSE--
THE MESS SERGEANT
PUT IT TOGETHER
OUT OF PROTEIN PACKS
AND THAT DAMNED
SOY CONCENTRATE--
BUT I THINK
THE FLAVOR WILL
SURPRISE YOU.



THE SERGEANT TELLS
ME YOUR FRIENDS
CALL YOU BILLIE. I
HOPE WE CAN BE
FRIENDS.

I MUST
APOLOGIZE FOR
ALL THAT'S HAPPENED.
WE'VE ALL BEEN SUFFERING
UNDER GREAT STRESS--
IT'S EASY TO FORGET THE
AMENITIES.

WHEN MAJOR
POWELL BROUGHT
YOUR SPECIAL
ABILITIES TO MY
ATTENTION, I
REALIZED I HAD
MADE A SERIOUS
MISTAKE.

WE--WE
NEVER INTENDED
TO IMPEDE YOUR
SCIENTIFIC MISSION,
GENERAL--

WHAT
EXACTLY IS
YOUR OBJECTIVE,
GENERAL?



BLEEP

WHEN
ORONA'S PEOPLE
BROUGHT US ONE OF
THE NASCENT
QUEENS, WE WERE
FRIGHTENED BY
ITS POWER.

THEN IT
SEEMED TO
SPEAK TO ME--
AND AT ONCE I
KNEW ITS TRUE
BEAUTY.



LOOK
AT THEM.
LOOK AT
THEM.

THE
FOOLS ON
EARTH WANTED
TO ANNIHILATE
THEM. NUCLEAR
DEVASTATION--MY
GOD, I COULDN'T
PERMIT IT.

SERGEANT
WILKS--
YOU FACED
THE ALIEN
ON ITS OWN
SOIL AND
SURVIVED.

HOW
I ENVY
YOU.

WE'RE
SO FRAIL,
SO WEAK
COMPARED
TO THEM.

THEY HAVE THE
STRENGTH AND POWER
OF TRUE SOLDIERS.
THEY DEMONSTRATE AN
UNQUESTIONING, UNSWERVING
LOYALTY TO THEIR
CAUSE.

ALL THEY
LACK IS PROPER
DIRECTION--
LEADERSHIP.

I CAN
PROVIDE THAT. I
CAN MAKE THEM INTO
AN ARMY. I CAN USE
THEM TO RECLAIM
EARTH FROM THEIR
BRETHREN.



YOUR CARGO
SHIP WAS LADEN WITH
SAMPLES OF THE EARTH-
BRED ALIEN, BUT YOU'VE
BLESSSED US WITH
SOMETHING FAR MORE
VALUABLE.

YOUR
EXPERIENCE.
YOUR
EXPERTISE.



GENERAL--
THE SENTRY ON
THE NORTHERN
ACCESS TIER HAS
BEEN MURDERED--
ONE OF THE LAND
TRACTORS IS
MISSING.

DR. POWELL
SUSPECTS AN
AWOL CONTINGENT
IS HEADING
FOR THE CIVILIAN
TERRAFORMING
COLONY.

SON OF A
BITCH--

I
WANT A
FULLY ARMED
ASSAULT TEAM
ON THE SPEEDER
DECK IN FIVE
MINUTES.

DO YOU
UNDERSTAND
NOW? THE FLESH IS
WEAK--AFRAID OF
WHAT IT DOESN'T
UNDERSTAND.

WE CAN DO
BETTER.



GIVE
THEM THE RUN
OF THE BASE--
BUT WATCH
THEM.



CHICK



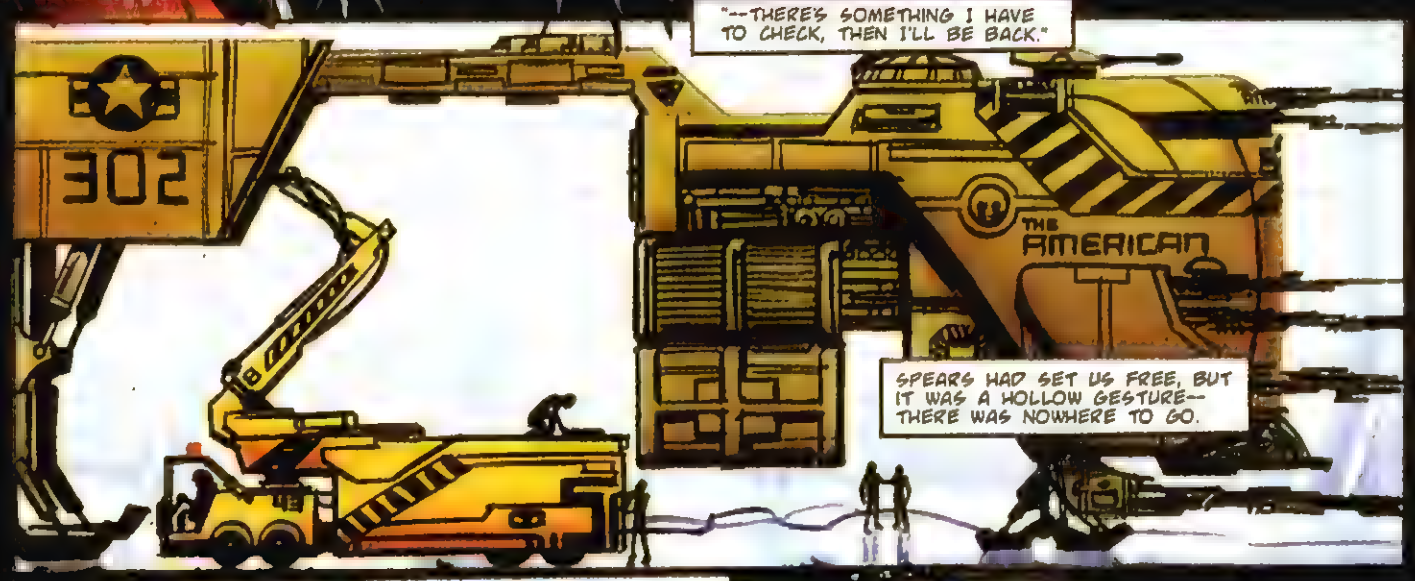
I FELT A TERRIBLE REALIZATION
WASH OVER ME, STINGING AND
BITTER. I WANTED TO BLAME
THE ALIENS FOR THE
DEVASTATION ON EARTH--BUT
THE TRUTH WAS FAR WORSE.

THE ALIENS WERE ONLY A TOOL.
WE WERE DESTROYING OURSELVES.

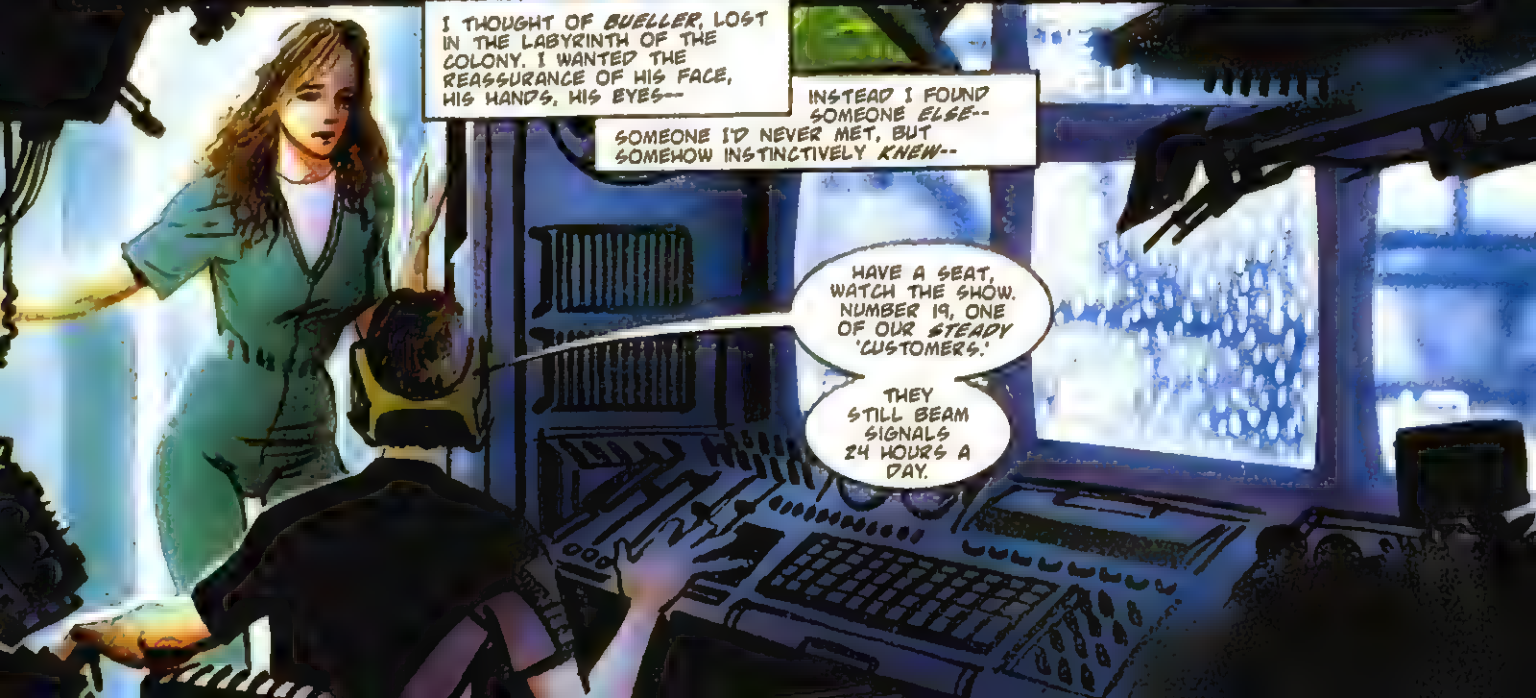


BILLIE, LISTEN
TO ME. WE'RE ONLY
ALIVE SO LONG AS
SPEARS NEEDS
US--

--THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE
TO CHECK, THEN I'LL BE BACK.



SPEARS HAD SET US FREE, BUT
IT WAS A HOLLOW GESTURE--
THERE WAS NOWHERE TO GO.



I THOUGHT OF BUELLER, LOST
IN THE LABYRINTH OF THE
COLONY. I WANTED THE
REASSURANCE OF HIS FACE,
HIS HANDS, HIS EYES--

INSTEAD I FOUND
SOMEONE ELSE--

SOMEONE I'D NEVER MET, BUT
SOMEHOW INSTINCTIVELY KNEW--

HAVE A SEAT,
WATCH THE SHOW.
NUMBER 19, ONE
OF OUR STEADY
'CUSTOMERS.'

THEY
STILL BEAM
SIGNALS
24 HOURS A
DAY.

I STARED AT THE
SCREEN. I SAW A
LITTLE GIRL, HER
FACE SMUDGED
WITH DUST AND
SMOKE.

WE'VE BEEN CLOCKING
THESE DIARY TRANSMISSIONS
SINCE THE MAINSTREAM STATIONS
WENT DOWN. LOOKS LIKE
SOME VIDEO TECHS GOT HOLD
OF THE GROUND RELAY CODES
AND TAPPED INTO THE
MAIN TRANSMITTER.

I SAW A
LITTLE GIRL...I
SAW MYSELF.

IT'S--IT'S
WORST
AT
NIGHT.

YOU
CAN'T SEE
THEM--YOU
CAN ONLY
HEAR THE
SCREAMS--



MILITARY
BASTARDS--



WE--WE
USUALLY AVOID THE
BUILDINGS--TOO MANY
PLACES FOR THOSE
THINGS TO HIDE--

'COURSE
NOTHING'S
REALLY SAFE
ANYMORE--

I DON'T
WANT TO RUN
ANYMORE--I WANT
TO GO HOME.

I KNOW
YOU DO, HONEY--
THAT'S ALL ANY
OF US WANTS.



DAMN!
WE'VE GOT TO
FIND BETTER
COVER--

WE'LL
LOSE THE UPLINK
INSIDE, BUT WE CAN'T
RISK THE STREET WITH
THESE GODDAMN ASSAULT
SHIPS ON THE RAMPAGE--

UNCLE?

SHIT! IT'S
OKAY, AMY--
WE'RE ALL
RIGHT--

I
USED TO THINK
THEY WERE FLYING
RECONNAISSANCE
MISSIONS--NOW I
THINK THEY'RE
JUST HAVING
FUN.

THAT'S
IT. LOST
THEM.

I CAN'T
FIGURE WHY THEY'RE
STILL KEEPING UP
THE RUSE--YOU KNOW,
PRETENDING SOMEONE'S
WATCHING--PRETENDING
SOMEONE EVEN
CARES--

MAYBE
IT'S ALL
THEY HAVE
LEFT--



THERE
IT IS--THE MAIN
COMMUNICATIONS
BUNDLE.



THE ALIEN MUST
HAVE CUT IT WHEN IT
ESCAPED--

--THEN
SPEARS WAS
RIGHT.



THE GENERAL
IS ALWAYS RIGHT.
YOU'D BEST GROW
ACCUSTOMED
TO IT.



JESUS! I
DIDN'T REALIZE I
WAS GOING TO BE
FOLLOWED.

WHO THE
HELL
ARE YOU?



MY NAME'S
POWELL. I
SUPPOSE YOU'D
CONSIDER ME THE
GENERAL'S SECOND
IN COMMAND--IF
SUCH A THING
REALLY
EXISTS.



HE'S
INSANE,
YOU KNOW.

NO.
I DON'T
KNOW.

TELL
ME ABOUT
HIM.



I
FIGURED
SPEARS WOULD
HAVE BEEN ALL
OVER US BY
NOW.

SOMETHING'S
WRONG. I'M
NOT GETTING
ANY SIGNALS--
NOT EVEN THE
STANDARD
BEACON--

IT'S THE
TERRAFORMERS
THAT WORRY ME. WE'RE
MILITARY. THEY MAY
NOT BE VERY HAPPY
TO SEE US.

THEY
ZEROED THEIR
BEACON WEEKS
AGO. SPEARS COULD
HAVE USED IT TO
HOME IN AND FLASH
THEIR COLONY
WITHOUT BREAKING
A SWEAT.

MAYBE--
MAYBE WE COULD
GET SOME SORT
OF ASYLUM?
YOU KNOW, LIKE
POLITICAL
PRISONERS?

YEAH. AND
AFTER THAT WE
CAN RUN FOR
PRESIDENT.

CHRIST,
PETERSON--
WE'RE AWOL. WE
DON'T NEED ASYLUM.
WE NEED A SHIP--
AND I'LL DO WHAT-
EVER IT TAKES
TO GET ONE.

I
DON'T LIKE
THIS, MAN. WE
SHOULD HAVE
SEEN
SOMEONE BY
NOW.

GIVE IT A
REST, MAGRUDER.
HALF THE STATION
IS AUTOMATED--IN
THIS WEATHER I'D
BE SURPRISED TO
SEE GODDAMNED
ANYONE
OUTSIDE.



THE
LAUNCH
BAYS ON THE
OTHER SIDE OF
THE FACILITY--
PEACE AND
QUIET ONLY
MAKE IT
EASIER.

JUST KEEP
MOVING. I DON'T
LIKE THIS--I
DON'T LIKE
ANY OF--

SOME-
THING'S UP
THERE.

JESUS,
NOW YOU'RE
GETTING TO
ME.

WAIT A
MINUTE--

THIS
SURFACE--
IT-IT'S NOT
LIKE THE REST.
IT'S ALMOST
ORGANIC--

FORGET
ABOUT IT. LET'S
JUST GET THE
HELL OUT OF
HERE--



AAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!



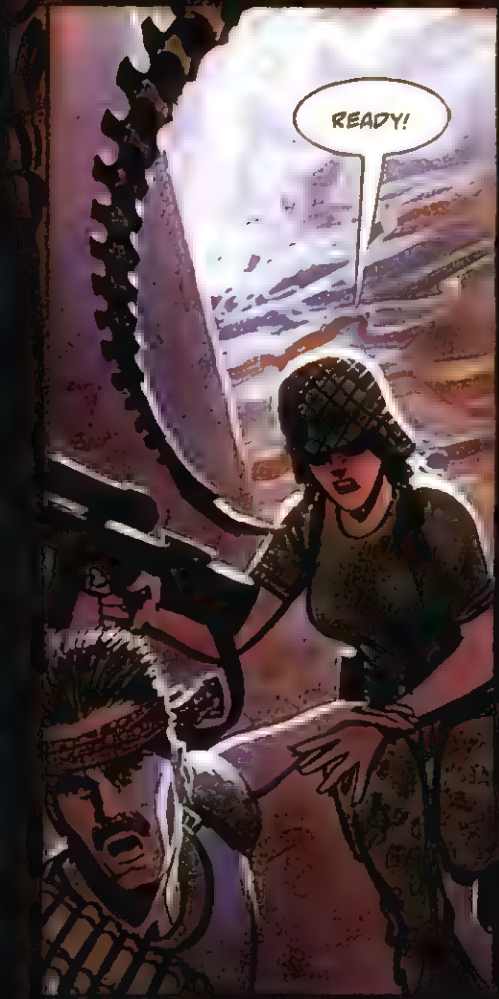
OH
MY
GOD.

...THEY'RE
EVERYWHERE.



WE'VE
GOT TO GET
OUT OF THE
CHAMBER.

MAGRUDER—
GET READY
WITH A
GRENADE!



READY!



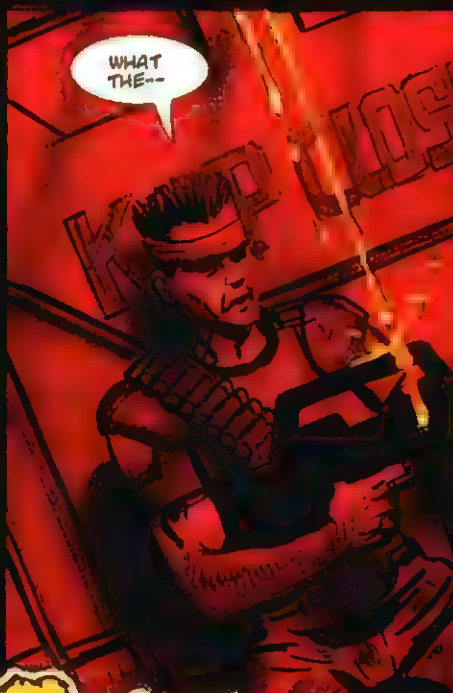
uUkk!

CLICK

5 4 3 2 1

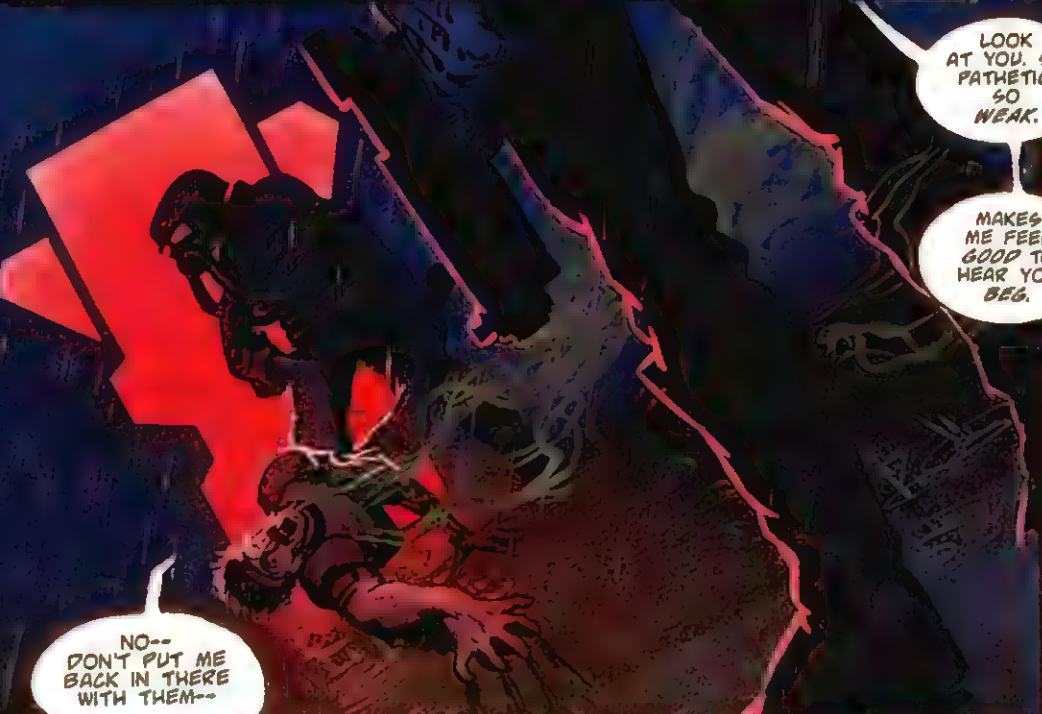
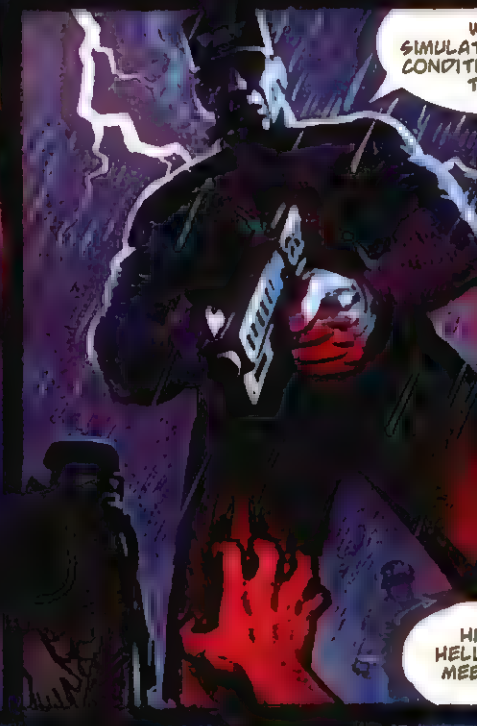


NO!



EEEEEEGAAGGH!!





NOOOOOOOOOOAGGHHH!



WHEN I JOINED THE MARINES, I WAS PROUD TO SERVE MY COUNTRY. THEY WANT THAT--THEY WANT YOU TO THINK YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT AND NOBLE.

SOMETIMES YOU BELIEVE IT. SOMETIMES IT'S EVEN TRUE.

HE'S INSANE, YOU KNOW.

SPEARS THINKS HE CAN TURN THE ALIEN AGAINST ITS OWN KIND.

POWELL WAS SECOND IN COMMAND, REPORTING DIRECTLY TO GENERAL SPEARS. HE HAD FOLLOWED ME INTO THE LOWER DECKS OF MY STRANDED CARGO SHIP BECAUSE HE NEEDED ME.

SPEARS BELIEVED, AND THE PURITY OF HIS BELIEF WAS TERRIFYING.

HE'S TAKEN THE CIVILIAN TERRAFORMING BASE AND TURNED IT INTO A BREEDING STATION. ALL THE COLONISTS ARE DEAD. ONLY A FEW OF US KNOW THE TRUTH.

NO.

NO ONE IS SAFE. SPEARS HAS WIRED THE ENTIRE COMPOUND-- HIS STAFF MONITORS THE SENIOR OFFICERS 24 HOURS A DAY.

EVERY FEW DAYS, SOMEONE DISPLEASES HIM. THEY JUST-- DISAPPEAR--

I UNDERSTOOD COMPLETELY. IN MANY WAYS I SHARED THE INTENSITY OF THE GENERAL'S VISION.

WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO STOP HIM-- BEFORE THE MADNESS GOES TOO FAR.

MEDICAL TYPES LOOK AT INFINITY LIKE SOME SORT OF *PIERRE*, BUT I THINK IT'S MORE *MECHANICAL* THAN THAT. LIKE A BROKEN CONNECTION, OR A MALFUNCTIONING COMPUTER CHIP.

LIFE, THOUGHT, EMOTION--JUST ELECTRICAL PULSES PASSING BETWEEN DIFFERENT LOBES OF THE BRAIN.

GENERAL, WE'VE FOUND A NEW QUEN IN THE LOWER LEVEL, NEAR THE UNDERGROUND ACCESS TUBES. WE'RE SENDING IN A PROBE TO MEASURE THE SIZE OF THE--

WHEN SOMETHING MECHANICAL FAILS, YOU DON'T WASTE TIME WITH *PSYCHOLOGY*. YOU EITHER *REPAIR* IT--OR YOU *REPLACE* IT.

I KNEW
I'D HAVE TO
KILL HIM.



SIR--
GET AWAY
FROM THE
EGGS!
THEY'RE
DANGEROUS--

WHAT ARE
WE WAITING FOR?
THOSE THINGS--

SHUT UP,
FOR CHRIST'S SAKE--
HE MIGHT HEAR
YOU--



DON'T BE
AFRAID, SON--
THEY DON'T WANT
TO HURT US.

CAN'T
YOU FEEL
IT?

I KNOW
WHAT IT'S LIKE
TO BE BORN INTO
PAIN. I WAS ONE OF
THE FIRST PRODUCTS
OF THE MILITARY'S
BIRTHING
PROGRAM.



GESTATED
OUTSIDE THE WOMB,
NURSED INSIDE A
STERILE BREEDER, THE
GENETICISTS DIDN'T
THINK IT WOULD
MATTER--

S-SIR--WE
SHOULD START
BACK TO THE MAIN
FACILITY. ROBINSON'S
PREDICTING A FORCE
10 STORM WITHIN
THE HOUR.

--THEY TOOK AWAY
THE ONLY THING THAT
MAKES US REAL--
SOMETHING THE ALIEN
CREATURES SHARE ABOVE
ALL ELSE--



--THE BOND
OF FLESH--



I DON'T
SEE HOW SPEARS
PLANS TO *USE* THE
CREATURES--YOU CAN'T
TRAIN THESE THINGS
ANYMORE THAN YOU
CAN TRAIN A RABID
DOG--

THERE'S
SOMETHING YOU
SHOULD SEE.

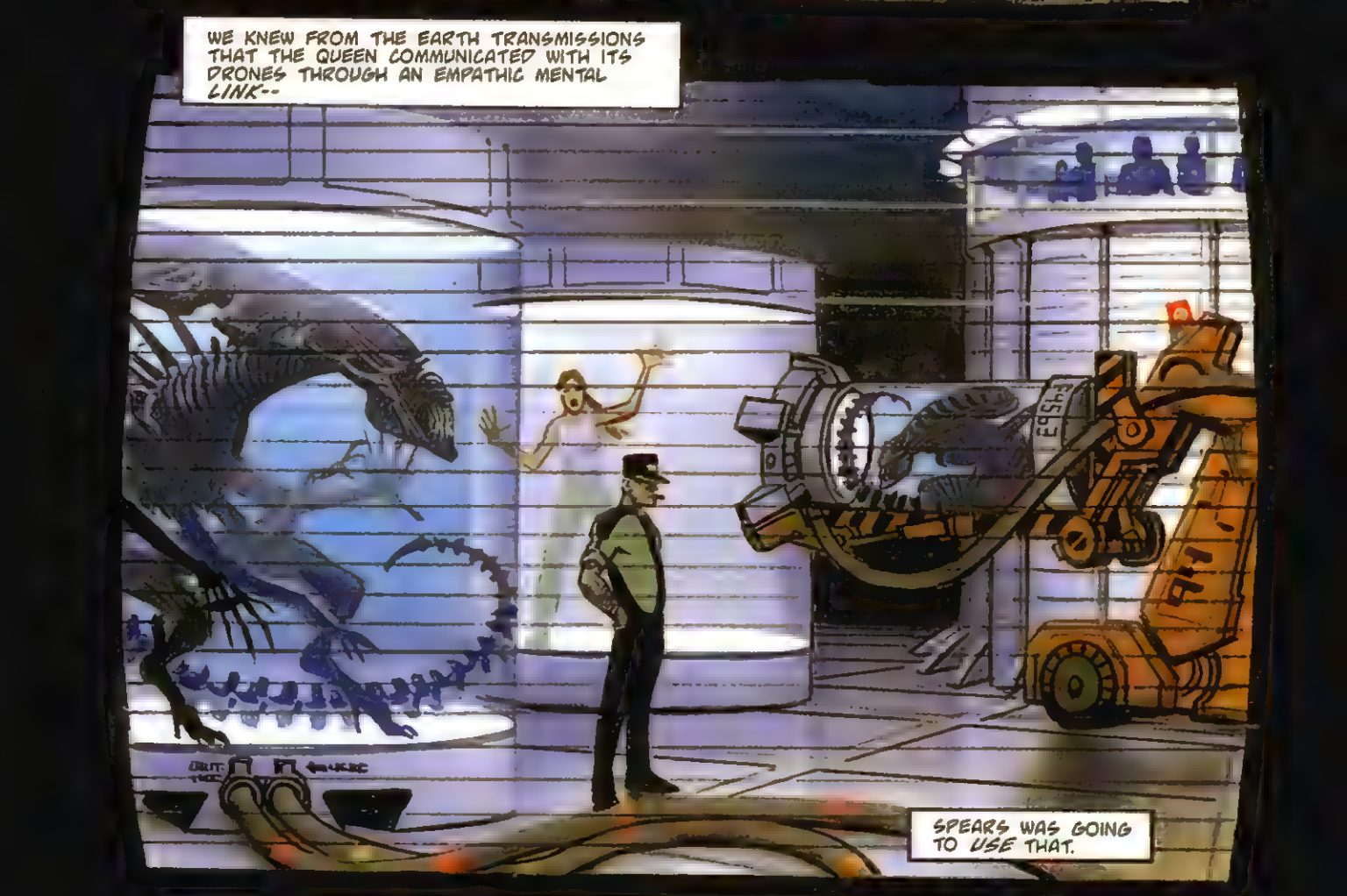
THE GENERAL
COMMANDEERED THE
TERRAFORMING COLONY
TO USE AS A TEST SITE.
HE WANTED TO
ACCLIMATE THE
ALIEN TO HUMAN
AUTHORITY.

HIS
TECHNICIANS KEPT
CAREFUL VIDEO
LOGS OF THE
EXPERIMENTS.

THE COLONISTS WERE TOLD
THAT A NEW STRAIN OF
VIRULENT BACTERIA HAD
BEEN FOUND, A BY-
PRODUCT OF THE NASCENT
TERRAFORMING PROCESS.

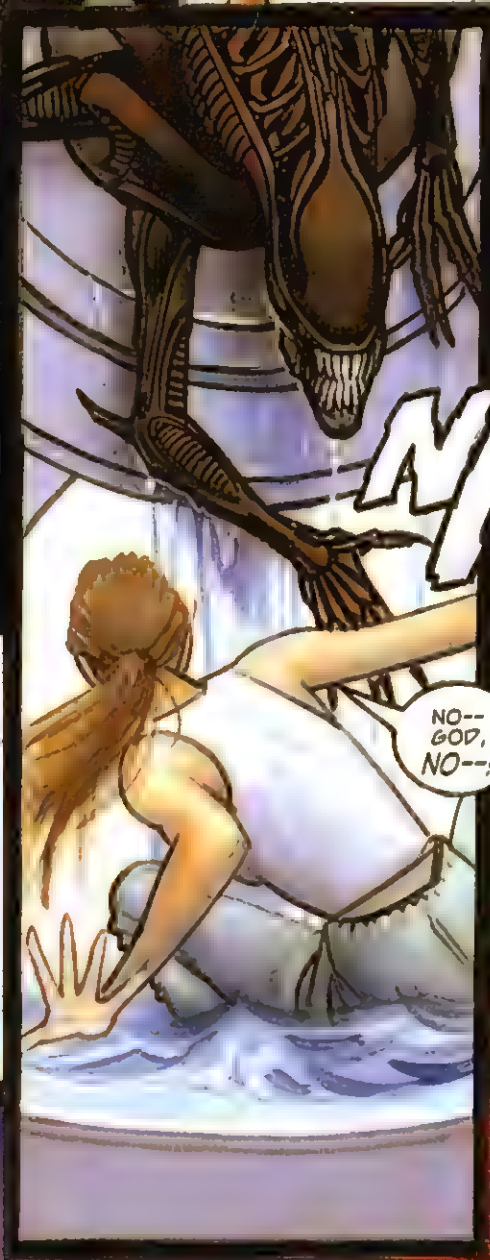
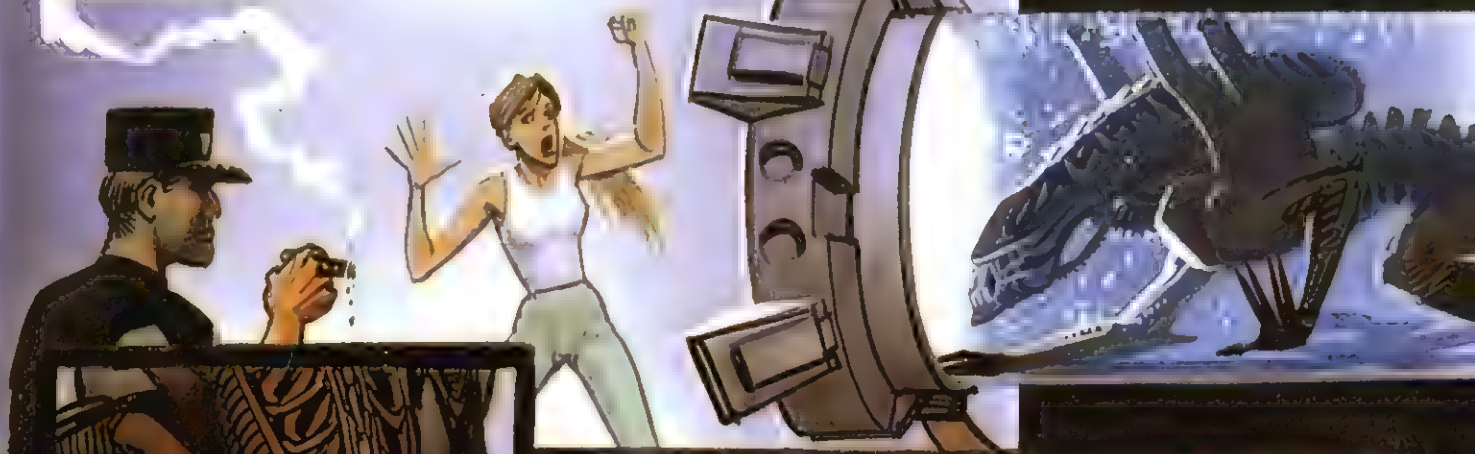
SPEARS USED THE RUSE AS AN
EXCUSE TO SEAL THE COLONISTS INTO
SEPARATE QUARANTINED CELLS.

WE KNEW FROM THE EARTH TRANSMISSIONS
THAT THE QUEEN COMMUNICATED WITH ITS
DRONES THROUGH AN EMPATHIC MENTAL
LINK--



SPEARS WAS GOING
TO *USE* THAT.

THE LESSONS
BEGAN ALMOST
IMMEDIATELY.



NO--
GOD,
NO--!



YOU NEVER
FORGET THE
SCREAMS--
NEVER--

THAT'S
ENOUGH.
BURN
IT.



HE FORCED THE QUEEN TO
WATCH AS HE BURNED
ITS CHILDREN.



CRASH

WAM

OVER
HERE!

NO.

AS THE SESSIONS CONTINUED,
I'M NOT SURE WHAT WAS MORE
FRIGHTENING--GENERAL
SPEARS AND HIS METHODS--

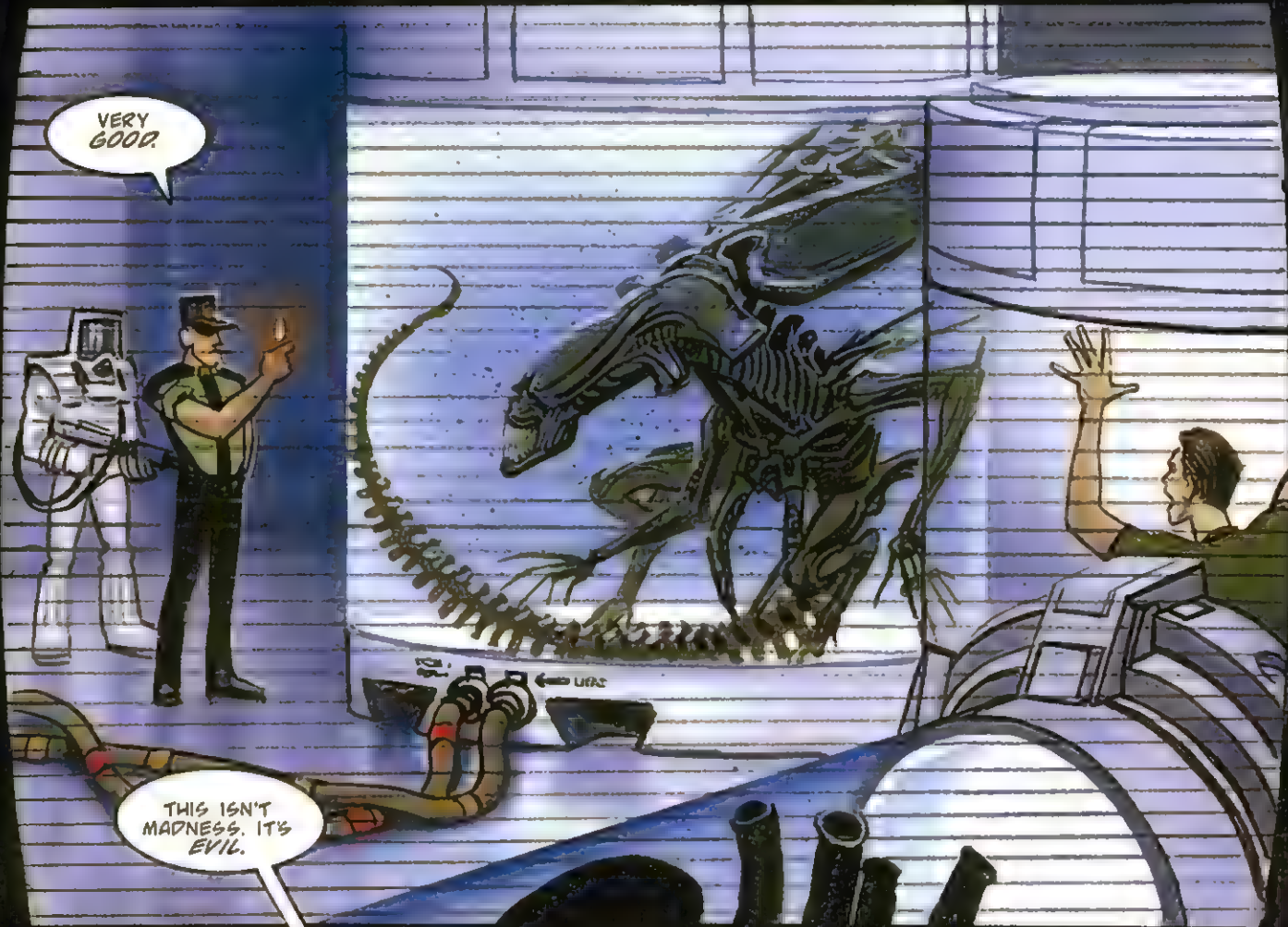
--OR THE FACT
THAT THE ALIEN
QUEEN SEEMED TO
UNDERSTAND.



AGGH--GET
IT OFF ME--GOD,
PLEASE--



VERY
GOOD.



THIS ISN'T
MADNESS. IT'S
EVIL.

I--
I DON'T
THINK
ABOUT
IT.

AS THE
EXPERIMENTS
CONTINUED, SPEARS
FOUND WAYS TO
PROVOKE MORE
SOPHISTICATED
RESPONSES FROM
THE CREATURES

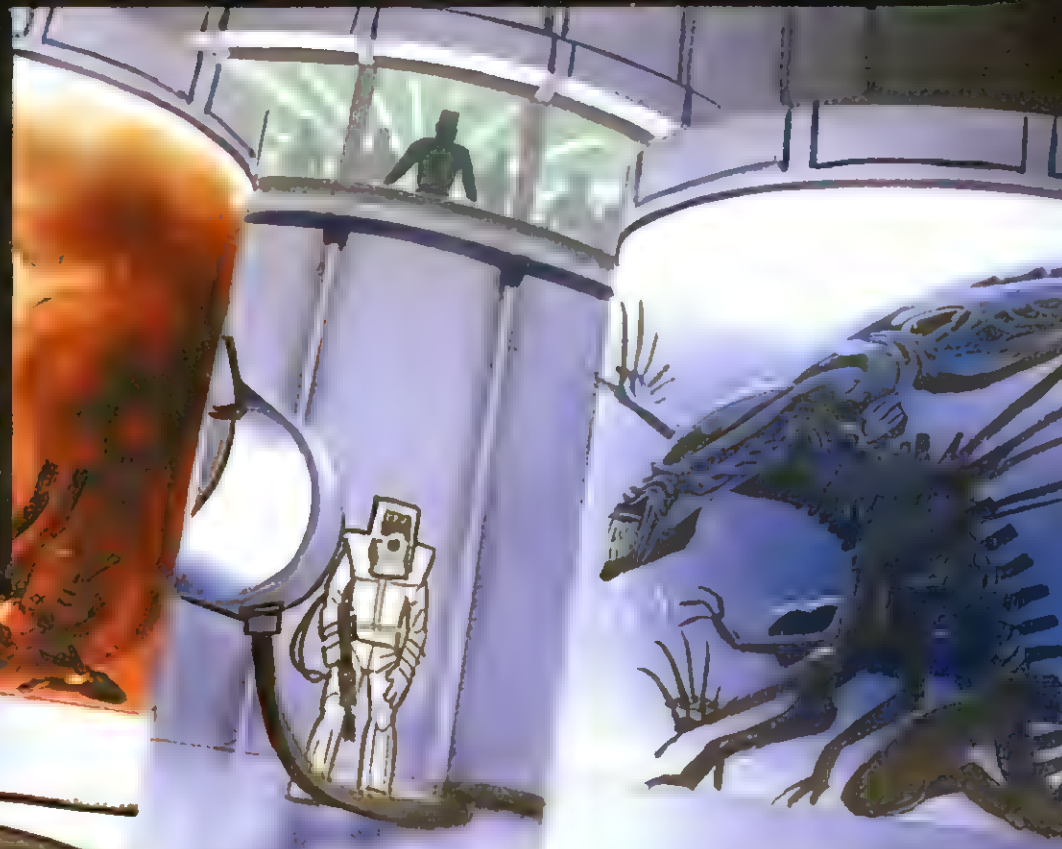


A person wearing a full-body white protective suit, including a hood and a clear face shield. They are holding a black handgun in their right hand. The person is standing against a dark background.



I'LL BURN
EVERY ONE
OF YOUR
PRECIOUS
CHILDREN
UNTIL
YOU LEARN
RESPECT--

A close-up, high-contrast illustration of a dinosaur's head, possibly a Tyrannosaurus Rex, with its mouth wide open, revealing sharp, white teeth. The dinosaur's skin is dark and textured. The entire image is framed by a jagged, metallic, city-scape-like border. The background is a mix of dark and light blue, suggesting a sky or a cave interior.



AS THE SESSIONS CONTINUED, SPEARS REMOVED SELECTED DRONES FROM THEIR PHYSICAL PROXIMITY TO THE QUEEN AND BROUGHT THEM BACK TO THE MAIN BASE.

HE WANTED TO BE NEAR THEM--HELP PREPARE THEM FOR THEIR JOURNEY TO EARTH.

PREPARE THEM FOR HIS WAR.

YOUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MONITORING EARTH TRANSMISSIONS FOR WEEKS. EARTH'S GONE--OVERRUN BY THOSE DAMNED THINGS.

SPEARS MUST KNOW THAT.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT EARTH. IT'S MORE THAN THAT--SOMETHING TO DO WITH SPEARS AND THE CREATURES--

THE GENERAL'S PARTY IS GOING TO BE DELAYED BY A STORM OUTSIDE THE TERRA-FORMING COLONY. FIVE HOURS--MAYBE SIX.

YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?

FIVE HOURS. NOT MUCH TIME.

IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE, DAMMIT! SPEARS IS ALREADY LOADING THOSE THINGS INTO THE TRANSPORT VESSELS.

WE WON'T BE ALONE--

THERE'S A WORD FOR WHAT WE'RE DISCUSSING--

YES. SURVIVAL.

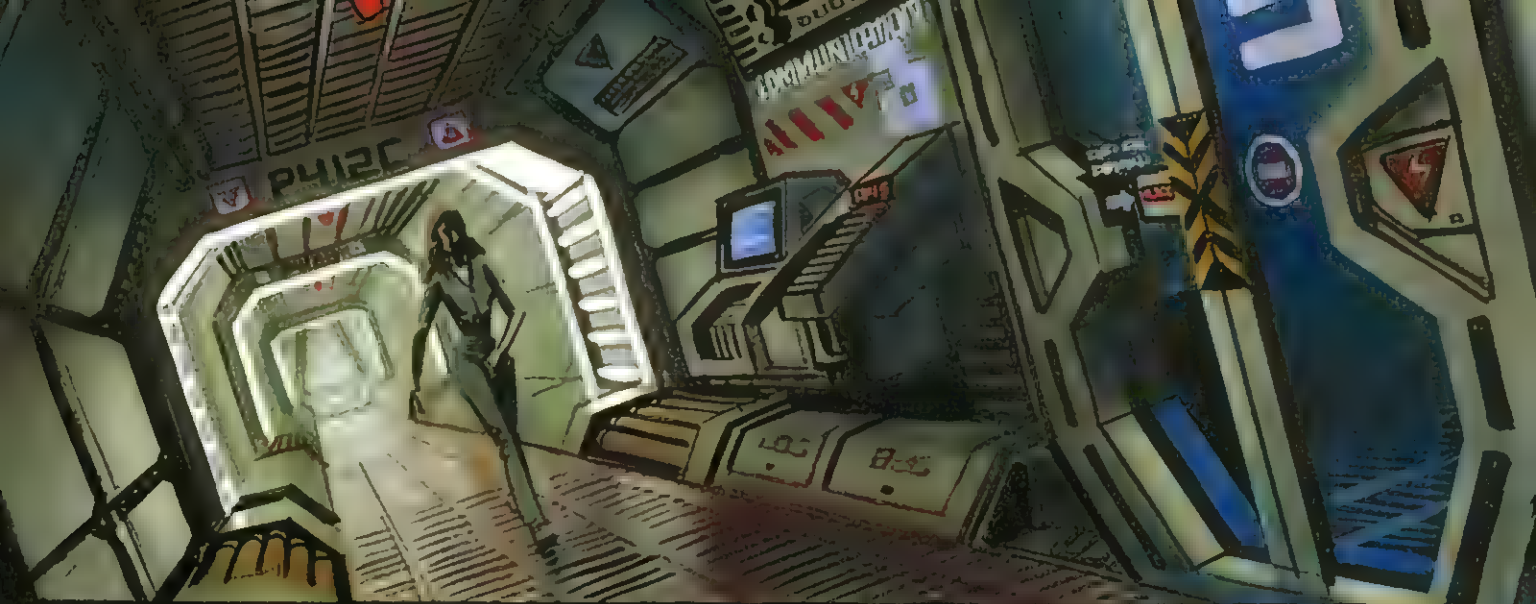
I WOKE EARLY, WATCHING BUELLER
SLEEP. FOR A MOMENT I IMAGINED
HE WAS *DREAMING*--

BUT BUELLER WAS AN ANDROID. HIS
'SLEEP' HAD BEEN *PROGRAMMED*--
HIS HUMAN FUNCTIONS WERE THERE
TO *CAMOUFLAGE* HIS TRUE NATURE.
WHAT WAS I WATCHING, *REALLY*? HOW
MANY HOURS OF *STUDY* HAD GONE
INTO THE SOFT PURR OF BREATH,
THE SLOW RISE OF NONEXISTENT
LUNGS?

FOR A TIME,
I THOUGHT
I LOVED IT.

I'D LET IT TOUCH
ME--I'D LET IT...

MY
GOD, WHAT'S
HAPPENING
TO ME?



SOMETHING KEPT BRINGING ME BACK TO THE LITTLE GIRL. MAYBE IT WAS KNOWING SHE WAS REAL-- THAT I COULD UNDERSTAND--

COMMUNICATION

YOU AGAIN? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU SEE IN THOSE TRANSMISSIONS--WE HAVE BETTER STUFF ON DISK.

SAY, WHEN YOU'RE THROUGH, WHY DON'T WE GET TOGETHER IN THE REC AREA--PLAY LET'S PRETEND WITH SOME OF THAT BONUS MONEY SPEARS HAS WAITING FOR US ON EARTH.

YEAH. SURE. WHATEVER.

HER FEAR. HER PAIN. I WOULD HAVE SAID ANYTHING TO GET THE SIGNAL BACK. AMY WAS MY ONLY LINK TO WHAT I WAS BEFORE--

UNCLE BURT, I'M SCARED--IT'S GETTING DARK AGAIN--

--BEFORE IT ALL HAD DIED--

--GETTING MORE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN THE UPLINK. ONCE THE CREATURES DESTROY THE RELAY STATION WE'LL BE CUT OFF--

--WE'LL KEEP TRANSMITTING-- UNTIL--

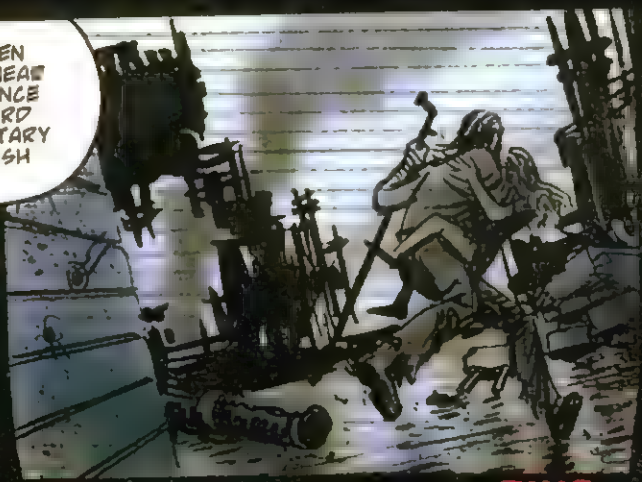


THIS WAY,
RAY.

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN
CONGREGATING NEAR
THE FIRST INSURANCE
PLAZA. WE'VE HEARD
RUMORS OF A MILITARY
FOOD DUMP, FRESH
WATER--

03

21:12



03

21:16



HOLD IT,
HOLD IT--

03

21:24



JESUS--
DO YOU HEAR
THAT?

03

21:30



03

21:33



NOOOOO!

03

21:38



OH MY
GOD.

03

21:41



DON'T BE
AFRAID OF
HER--JOIN
HER--

03

21:43



03

21:45

CAN'T
YOU SEE? SHE
LOVES YOU--
SHE LOVES ALL
OF US--





YOU'RE ONLY MAKING IT HARDER--
ONCE SHE JOINS WITH YOU, THERE'S
NO MORE PAIN--

03

--ONLY THE PEACE
THAT COMES FROM
BEING WITH GOD--

21:48



DON'T BE AFRAID--
SHE ONLY WANTS TO
TOUCH YOU.

03

21:49



03

UNCLE
BURT--!

21:52



AMY--GET
AWAY!

TRANS. OFF A

21:56



03

KEEP HER SAFE,
RAY--DON'T LET
THEM TAKE HER!



OH
JESUS--
THEY'VE DROPPED
DOWN BEHIND
US--

UNCLE
BURT--UNCLE
BURT--

03

21:59



SOMEBODY
HELP US--

--PLEASE--
PL-N-ZZZ-N-

03

22:00



AMY!

22:01

K-CHUNK

BUDABUDABUDABUDDA

WHA--?

NOBODY
MOVES!

BILLIE--
GET OVER
HERE.

WHAT
THE
HELL--

GENERAL SPEARS
IS ON HIS WAY BACK FROM
THE TERRAFORMING COLONY.
ONCE HE ARRIVES, MAJOR
POWELL AND I WILL RELIEVE
HIM OF HIS COMMAND.

POWELL
WILL BE HANDLING
COMMUNICATIONS
FROM THE OBSER-
VATION DECK--

AM I MAKING
MYSELF
CLEAR?

POWELL HAS
HIS MEN INSIDE THE
LOADING BAY, WAITING FOR
THE GENERAL'S TRANSPORT.
WE HAVE THE ELEMENT OF
SURPRISE, BUT--

--BUT SPEARS
WILL DIE BEFORE
HE GIVES UP HIS
COMMAND.

THIS IS
BULLSHIT. THE GENERAL
WAS GOING TO TAKE CARE
OF US WHEN THIS WAS
ALL OVER--

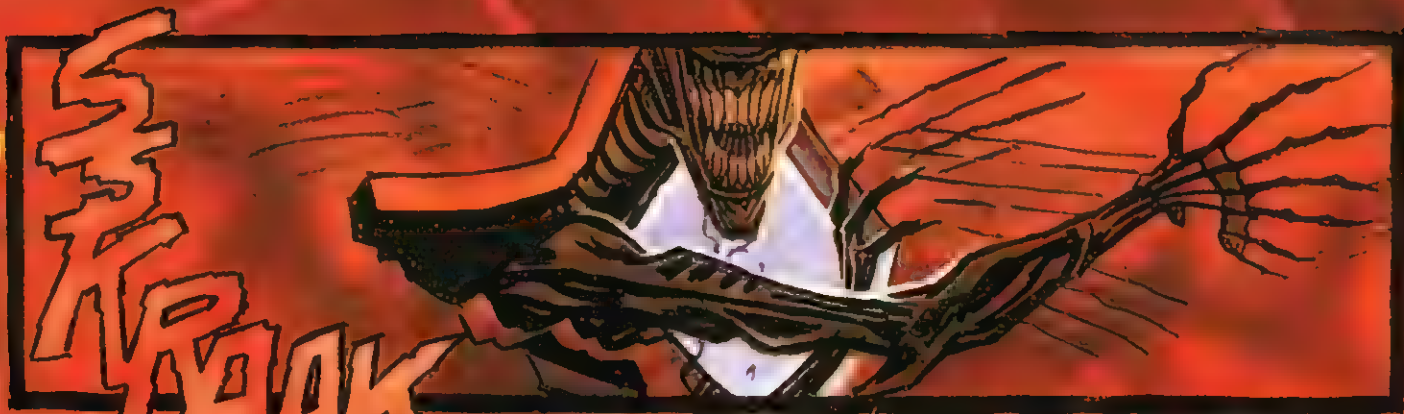
YOU'RE
BLOWING IT,
MAN--

SHUT
UP AND KEEP
MOV--



SCREW YOU
AND YOUR
GIRLFRIEND.





SOMETHING'S
STRANGE
HERE,
GENERAL.

MAJOR
POWELL'S HANDLING
THE APPROACH INSTEAD
OF SERGEANT KELLNER,
AND THE STANDARD
ACCESS CHANNELS HAVE
GONE DEAD. WE--

JESUS, SIR--
I'M GETTING AN
AUTOMATIC
ALARM ON THE
CENTRAL HOLDING
FACILITY--

THERE--
THERE'S BEEN A
BREACH--

BREAK OFF OUR
APPROACH AND WAIT FOR
MY INSTRUCTIONS.

DIDN'T
FIGURE IT
WOULD BE
POWELL--BUT
WHAT THE HELL...
WHEN THE CAT'S
AWAY--

DAMN--
HE'S VEERING
OFF--

HE
KNOWS--



WE HAVE
TO GET TO THE
DOCKING BAY. POWELL'S
ALREADY IN POSITION,
AND THE--

MY GOD,
WILKS--WHAT
ABOUT THE
OTHERS?



THEY
WOULD HAVE
KILLED US FOR A
FEW CREDITS--
THE GENERAL'S
PROMISES OF
GLORY--

SCREW
'EM.

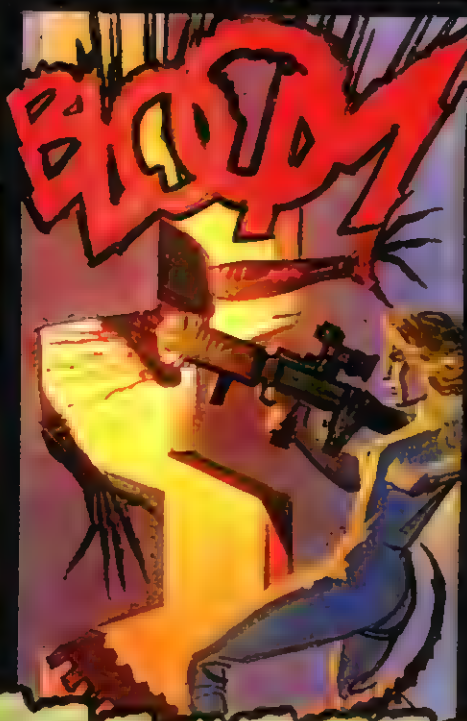
SHIT,
THEY'RE
SPREADING OUT
ACROSS THE
BASE--!

JUST LIKE
BEFORE--
RIM,
EARTH--

YOU
NEVER STOP
THEM--



--YOU ONLY
SURVIVE--





I WANTED TO BE
BRAVE--I
WANTED TO PRETEND
THAT MY DEATH
WOULD MEAN
SOMETHING.

SHORT BURSTS--
CONSERVE YOUR
AMMUNITION--

--BUT THE TIME FOR
SELF-DECEPTION
HAD PASSED.

--SAVE
THE LAST
ROUNDS FOR
YOURSELF.



I TRIED TO REMEMBER MY
MOTHER AND FATHER. I
TRIED TO REMEMBER THEIR
LOVE--BUT COULDN'T. IT
WAS ALL SO LONG AGO,
SO DISTANT--

--THEN I THOUGHT
OF BUELLER, AND
I BEGAN TO CRY--

COME
ON, DAMN IT--
LET'S FINISH
IT--



CEASE
FIRE--OR I'LL FRY
YOU WHERE YOU
STAND!

THEY
UNDERSTAND
THE
FLAME.

I'M
THEIR NEW
MASTER.

PREPARE
THE TRAITORS
FOR EXECUTION.
THEN READY THE
TRANSPORTS
FOR OUR
JOURNEY BACK
TO EARTH--

IT'S
TIME.

THEY GAVE US NAMES,
FACES, EMOTIONS--

THEY SHOULD HAVE
TOLD US.

MY CONSCIOUS MEMORY IS LIKE
A STORY WITH NO BEGINNING.
ONE MOMENT THERE IS NOTHING.

THE NEXT I AM WHOLE.

I HAD NO REASON TO QUESTION
IT--NONE OF US DID.

COME ON,
BUELLER,
MOVE IT--!

MY SQUAD WAS SYNTHESIZED FOR THE
ALIEN MISSION. WE WERE SOCIALIZED
AND DOMESTICATED TO IMPROVE
COMPATIBILITY WITH OUR HUMAN
SHIPMATES.

WHAT WAS THE GENESIS
OF MY LOVE? WAS IT THE
LAST VESTIGE OF SOME
PROGRAMMER'S SICK,
COMIC-EROTIC JOKE?

BILLIE DIDN'T KNOW
NEITHER OF US KNEW.

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY EXPLAIN MY PAIN
WHEN BILLIE FINALLY UNDERSTOOD THE
HORROR OF OUR LIFE?

EVERYTHING I BELIEVED IN HAD BEEN
TAKEN FROM ME. I WASN'T HUMAN.
I WASN'T ANYTHING.

BILLIE WAS ALL
I HAD LEFT--

--AND THEY WERE GOING TO
TAKE HER FROM ME AS WELL.

LOADING BAY
SEC. CAM. 3

MY
CHILDREN
UNDERSTAND THE
FLAME.

THERE'S
A PURITY TO
THE ALIEN I FIND
REFRESHING.
THERE'S NOTHING--
UNCERTAIN--
ABOUT ITS
MOTIVES.

YOU'RE
COMPLETELY
MAD. YOUR MEN
SHOULD HAVE KILLED
YOU MONTHS
AGO.

MY MEN
BELIEVE IN
ME--THEY
TRUST ME.

SPICER,
TAKE THE
FLAMER.

DID YOU
REALLY
THINK YOUR
PATHETIC
TREASON
WOULD
SUCCEED?



LOAD THE REST OF THE CREATURES INTO THE SHIP'S HOLD AND PREPARE FOR LAUNCH. IT'S TIME.

I CAN FEEL THE ALIENS' IMPATIENCE. THEY'RE EAGER TO PROVE THEIR LOYALTY IN COMBAT.



THEY HAVE CONSUMED MAN'S IMPERFECTION, LEAVING THE EARTH CLEANSED-- READY FOR A NEW MASTER.

MY TROOPS WILL RECLAIM EARTH FROM THEIR BRETHREN. TOGETHER WE WILL CREATE A NEW WORLD.

COMBAT?

WHO'S LEFT TO CONQUER, SPEARS? WHAT'S LEFT TO DESTROY?

I EXPECTED BETTER FROM YOU, WILKS--! I'M FIGHTING FOR MANKIND'S FUTURE--

THESE CREATURES ARE OUR SALVATION--!

I GET IT. YOU'RE FRIENDS NOW--

CHRIST, YOU ARE INSANE.

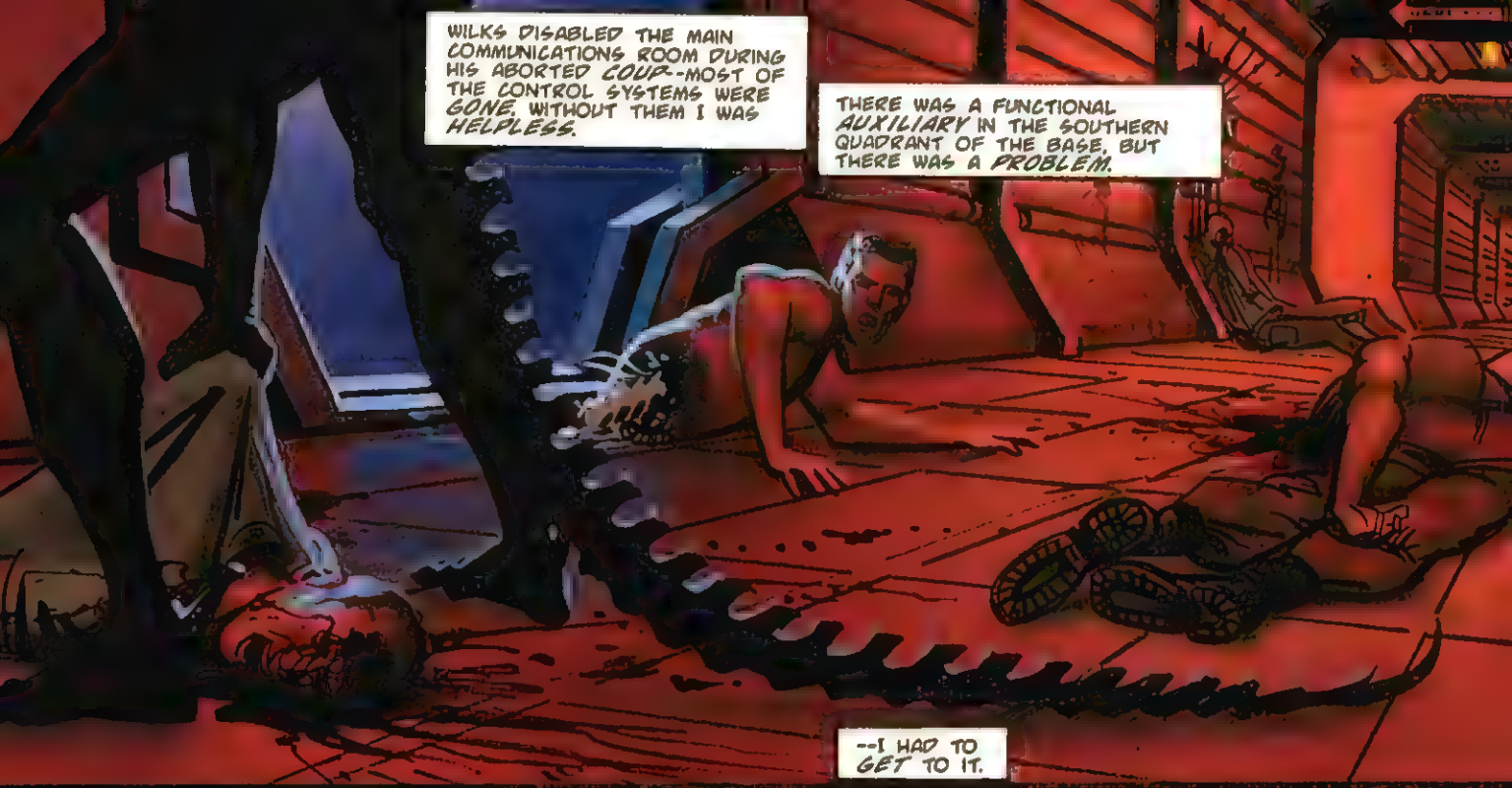


TAKE THE THREE OF THEM TO THE BREEDING CENTER--LEAVE THEM TO THE CREATURES STILL IN THE BASE.

IT'S THE LEAST WE CAN DO FOR OUR NEW ALLIES.

I'M COMING BACK FOR YOU, SPEARS--

BILLIE--



WILKS DISABLED THE MAIN COMMUNICATIONS ROOM DURING HIS ABORTED *COUR*-MOST OF THE CONTROL SYSTEMS WERE GONE WITHOUT THEM I WAS *HELPLESS*.

THERE WAS A FUNCTIONAL *AUXILIARY* IN THE SOUTHERN QUADRANT OF THE BASE, BUT THERE WAS A *PROBLEM*.

--I HAD TO GET TO IT.



I FOUND THE ALIEN'S PROGRESSION *PERVERSELY FASCINATING*. MAN USES HIS *MACHINES* TO *TERRAFORM* HOSTILE WORLDS, TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT AMENABLE TO HUMAN LIFE.

THE ALIEN NEEDS NO MACHINES.

THE CREATURES *IGNORED* ME. PERHAPS I WASN'T VIEWED AS A THREAT. OR MAYBE I DIDN'T SHARE THE *ORGANIC SCENT* OF *SPEARS' MEN*--

WHERE'S *SPEARS*?!

MISERABLE *BASTARD* LEFT US TO *DIE--!*



--OR THEIR *TERRIBLE, UNYIELDING FEAR*.

AS I NEARED THE SECONDARY CONTROL ROOM, THE SOUNDS OF STRUGGLE FADED-- REPLACED BY THE LIQUID HISS OF ALIEN LIFE.

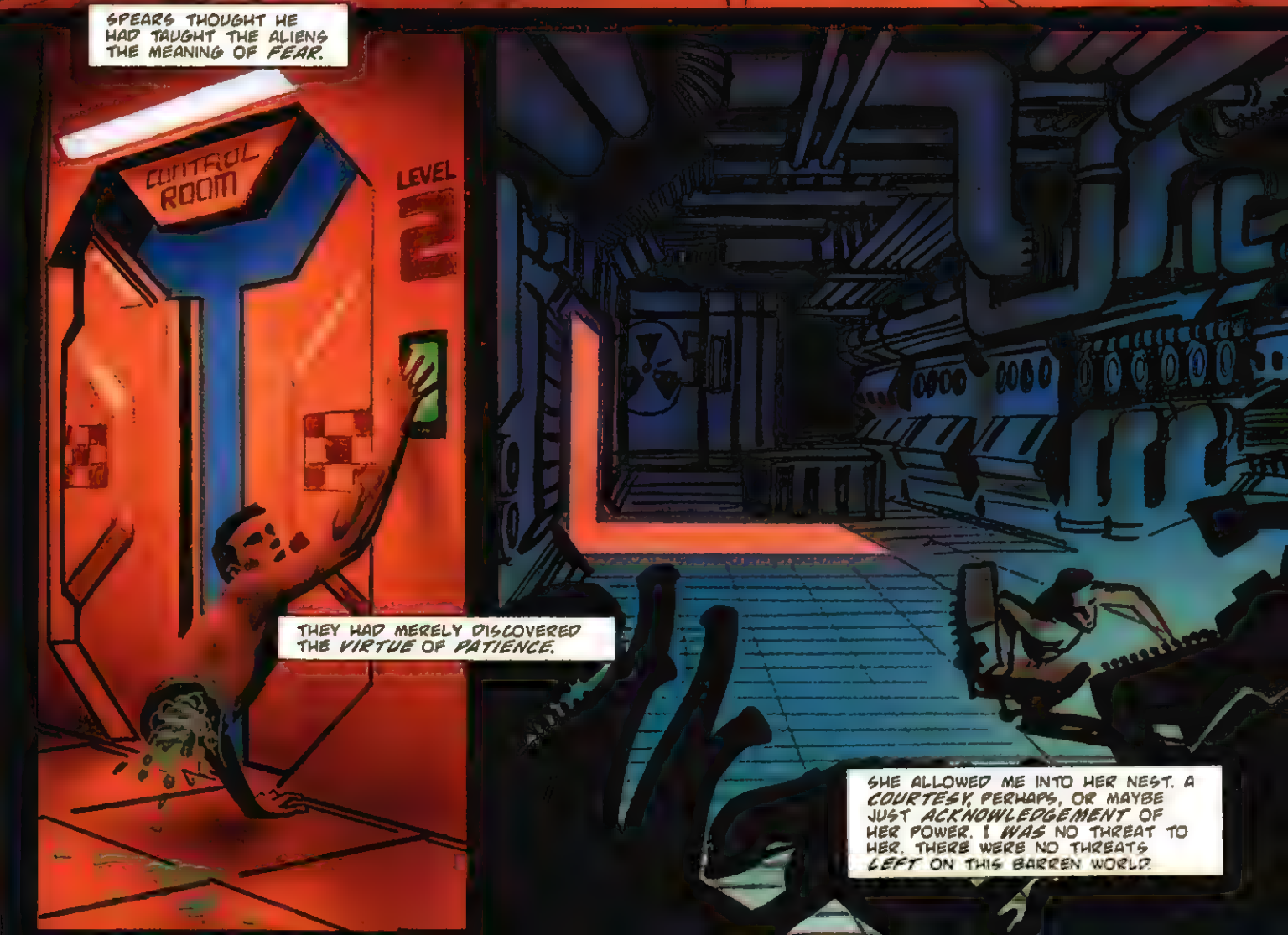


BODIES WERE EVERYWHERE, STARK REMNANTS OF THE ALIENS' REPRODUCTIVE FURY. FREED FROM THE CONFINES OF THE GENERAL'S BREEDING CHAMBER, THE PARASITES MULTIPLIED WITH REMARKABLE SPEED.



THIS WORLD BELONGED TO THEM.

SPEARS THOUGHT HE HAD TAUGHT THE ALIENS THE MEANING OF FEAR.



THEY HAD MERELY DISCOVERED THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE.

SHE ALLOWED ME INTO HER NEST. A COURTESY, PERHAPS, OR MAYBE JUST ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HER POWER. I WAS NO THREAT TO HER. THERE WERE NO THREATS LEFT ON THIS BARREN WORLD.

MOVE IT.

SHIT, MAN--YOU
CAN STILL HEAR THE
SCREAMING--

TH-THIS IS
FAR ENOUGH--
JUST LEAVE
'EM--

YOU
HEARD SPEARS--
HE WANTS THEM
INSIDE. IF
WE--

SCREW
SPEARS--I'M NOT
GOING FACE TO FACE
WITH THOSE THINGS
TO ACCOMMODATE
HIS SENSE OF--

--JESUS--
HE'S GOING
FOR MY--

BLAM!

AGHHH--

HOLD
IT, RIGHT
THERE.

TO HELL WITH
ORDERS--SPEARS' MONSTERS
WILL HAVE TO GO WITHOUT
THEIR SUP--

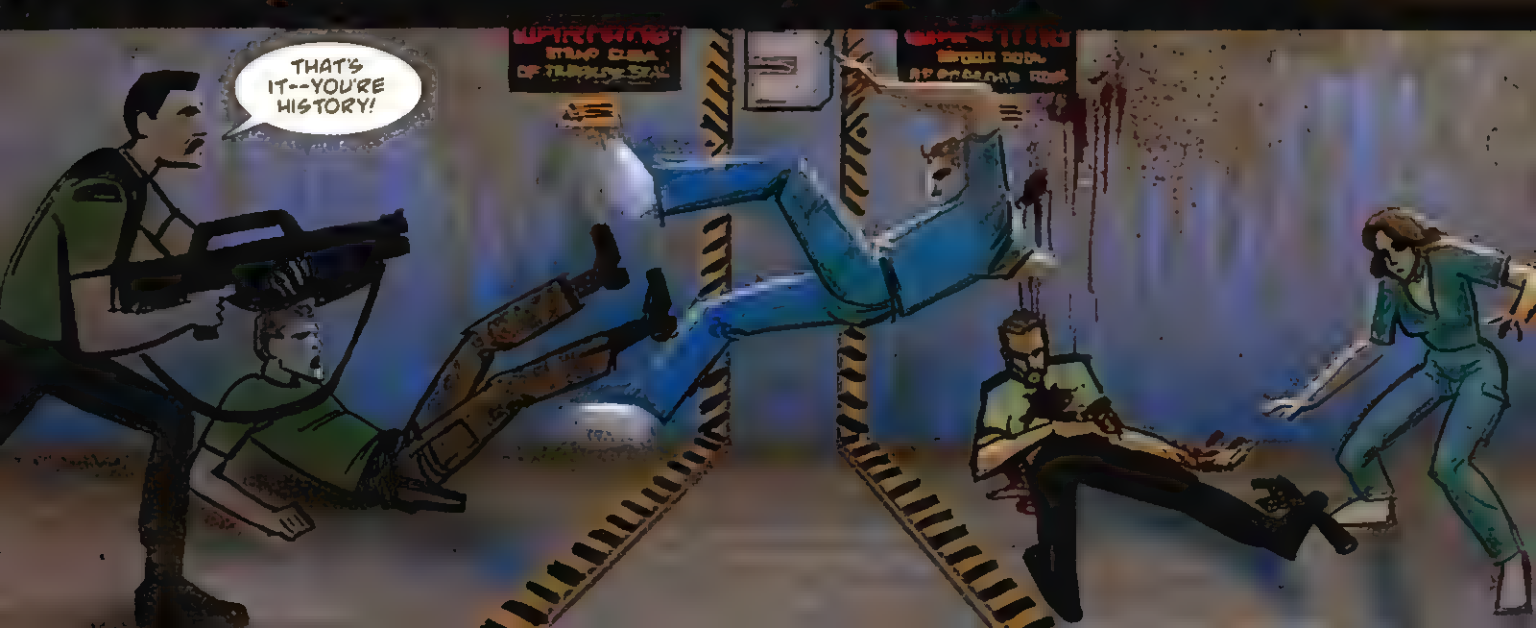


THINK
SMART, DAMMIT--
THOSE THINGS ARE
EVERYWHERE. YOU'LL
NEVER MAKE IT
OUT ALONE--

MAYBE,
MAYBE
NOT--

--BUT
YOU WON'T
BE HERE TO
FIND OUT--

WHAT
THE--

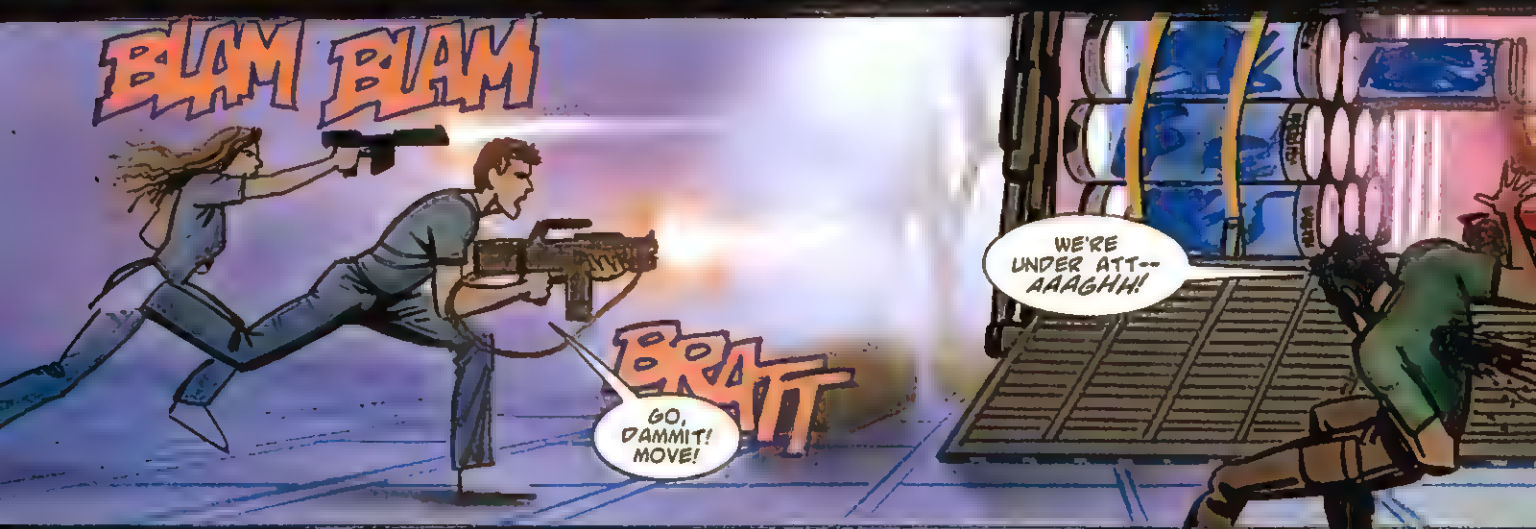
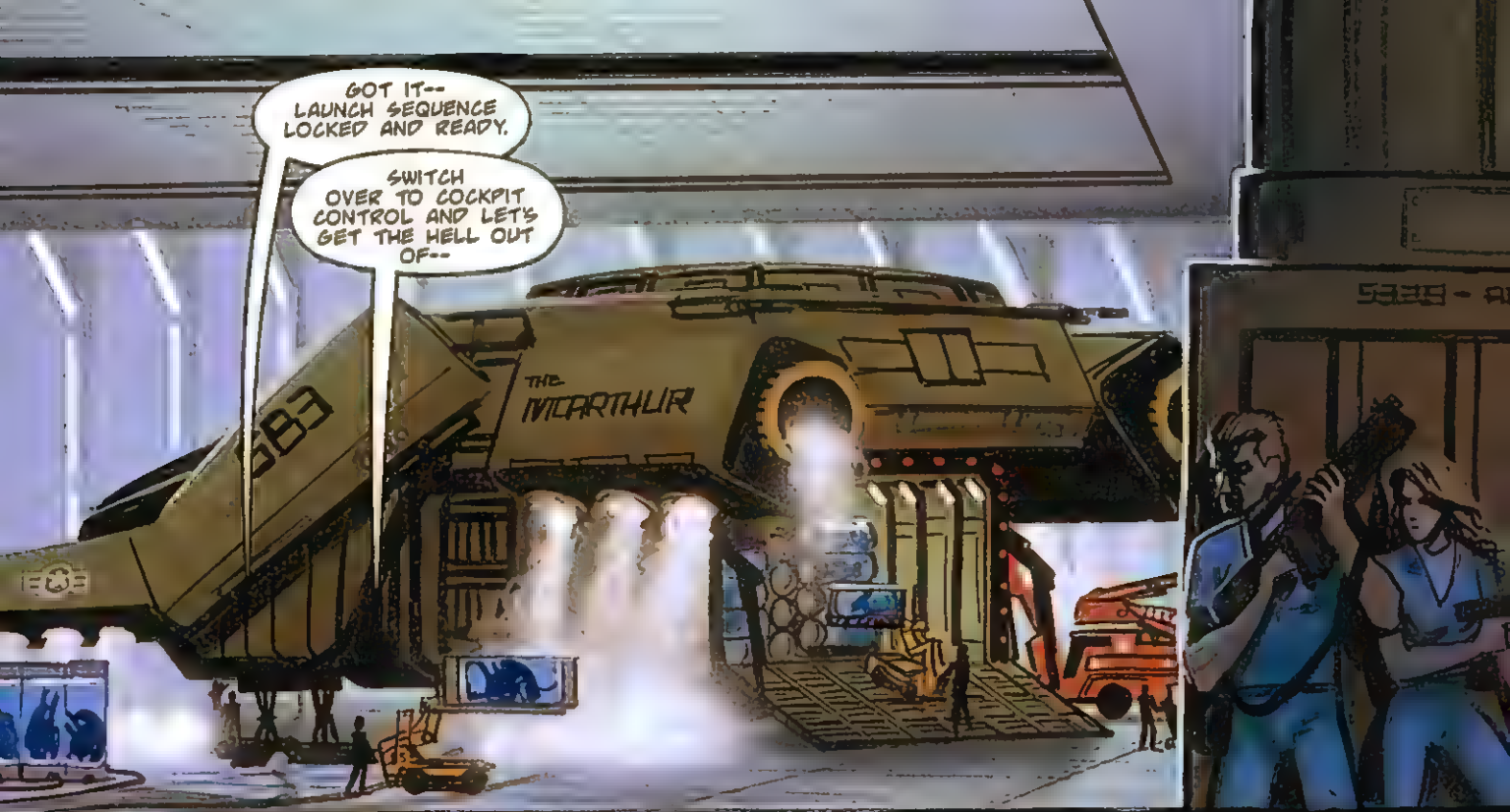


THAT'S
IT--YOU'RE
HISTORY!

WARNING!
STAND CLEAR
OF PRESSURE SEAL

WARNING!
STAND CLEAR
OF PRESSURE SEAL







THAT FILTHY
SON OF A
BITCH--

HE'S
LEAVING US
BEHIND--

STAND
CLEAR--THE
ENGINES--

A CREW WOULD
ONLY
COMPLICATE
MATTERS.

THERE ARE TIMES
WHEN A LEADER IS
FORCED TO MAKE
DIFFICULT DECISIONS--
DECISIONS FOR THE
SAKE OF THE
MISSION--

AAAAAGGGGHHHH!!!



SOMEONE'S
ABOARD WITH US
MORE TRAITORS.
MORE SPIES.

TRYING TO
INTERFERE WITH
OUR MISSION--



--CAN'T
LET THAT
HAPPEN--

THE
NAVIGATIONAL
COMPUTERS ARE
CENTRALIZED IN THE
COCKPIT--I'LL DEAL
WITH SPEARS,
THEN--

WHAT'S HE
DOING--?



NO! NO! NO!

MEN OF
LIMITED VISION
SOMETIMES HAVE
DIFFICULTY SEEING
THE TRUTH--

--I DON'T
HAVE THE TIME
OR PATIENCE
TO EDUCATE
THEM.



TIME PASSED
SLOWLY IN THE
DARKNESS.

I FELT SO
LOST--SO
ALONE.

WILKS SPENT THE FIRST DAYS SEARCHING
FOR A WAY TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE
SHIP--BUT HIS KNOWLEDGE OF COMPUTER
TECHNOLOGY DIDN'T EXTEND TO COUNTER-
MANDING A NAVIGATIONAL MAINFRAME.



FOR A TIME WE WORRIED THAT
SPEARS WOULD FIND A WAY TO
BYPASS THE SHIP'S ENVIRONMENTAL
CONTROL--

BLAM

Tik

BLAM

BLAM

--BUT, SEQUESTERED IN HIS
ALLOY COCCOON, SPEARS
IGNORED US, LOST IN HIS
VISIONS OF WAR AND
GLORY. THE STIMULANTS
HE RELIED ON FED HIS
PARANOIA.

Tik

Tik

FINALLY, LOGIC EXHAUSTED,
WILKS REVERTED TO RAW,
FRUSTRATED INSTINCT.

THAT THE COCKPIT WAS
DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND
EXPLOSIVE DECOMPRESSION
MEANT NOTHING TO HIM.

WILKS' FURY NO
LONGER HAD ANY-
THING TO DO WITH
MUTINY. IT WAS
ABOUT HATRED--
VENGEANCE.

DAMN
YOU TO
HELL!

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

THE MAIN COMMUNICATIONS DECK WAS OURS. SOMETHING DREW ME THERE--SOMETHING INCOMPLETE, UNSETTLED--

THE LAST OF THE MEN ARE EITHER DEAD OR--SLEEPING. IT'S BECOME QUITE PEACEFUL. I'M SURROUNDED BY NEW LIFE NOW.

I STARED AT HIS FACE, HIS EYES--SO CAREFULLY DESIGNED TO CREATE THE ILLUSION OF HUMANITY--

--AND THEN I REALIZED-- THE SCIENTISTS HAD FAILED. BUELLER WAS NO MORE HUMAN THAN THOSE ALIEN THINGS.

HE WAS BETTER...

I- I'VE BEEN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN US-- TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF OUR PASSION--

--BUT THERE IS NO SENSE TO IT. IT JUST HAPPENED-- RANDOM, UNPREDICTABLE-- LIKE LIFE.

THERE IS ONLY ONE PERFECT TRUTH, BILLIE-- I LOVE YOU. I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.

I HOPE YOU WILL ONE DAY--ZZZZ-- FORGIVE ME--

FORGIVE YOU--?

HE PROTECTED ME, HELD ME,
LOVED ME, AND I LEFT HIM
TO THE ALIEN--HE WOULD
BE ALONE, FOREVER.

THAT WAS MY
"PERFECT TRUTH."

--ZZZZZ--THIS
IS GATEWAY EARTH
STATION--IDENTIFY
YOURSELF AND STATE
YOUR DESTINATION.

SON
OF A--

PROJECTIONS
SHOW YOU TARGETED
FOR EARTH LANDING--
DO NOT ATTEMPT THIS.
REPEAT, DO NOT--

THIS IS
SERGEANT WILKS
ABOARD THE CARGO
VESSEL MCARTHUR--
REQUEST STATUS ON
PROJECTED LANDING
COORDINATES--

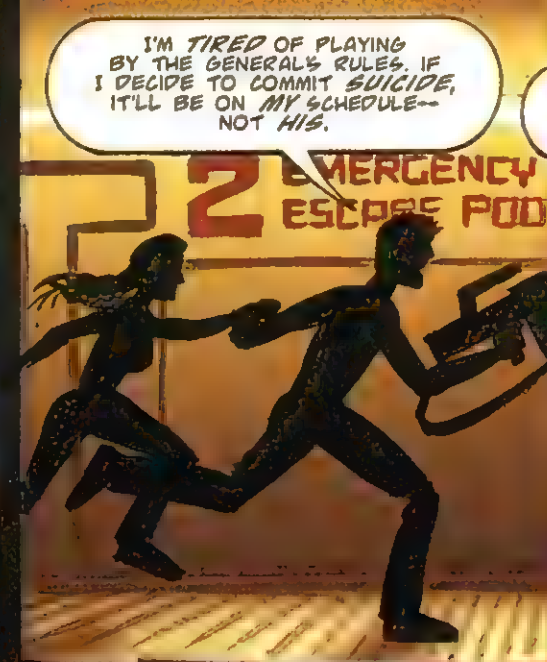
THERE ARE
NO LANDING
COORDINATES.
EARTH'S GONE--
LOST TO THOSE
THINGS.





COME ON, WE'RE LEAVING.

WHAT--? WHERE?



I'M TIRED OF PLAYING BY THE GENERAL'S RULES. IF I DECIDE TO COMMIT SUICIDE, IT'LL BE ON MY SCHEDULE-- NOT HIS.



THE POD'S DESIGNED FOR SHORT RANGE EMERGENCIES. MANEUVERABILITY IS THE SHITS--

BUT IT OUGHT TO BE ENOUGH TO GET US TO THE STATION.



ARE YOU SURE THE POD'S FUNCTIONAL? THE GENERAL--

CHANCES ARE SPEARS SABOTAGED IT ALONG WITH EVERYTHING ELSE--

--FUNNY THING IS, I JUST DON'T GIVE A DAMN ANYMORE.

I WATCHED THEM DISAPPEAR IN THE DARKNESS. I LET THEM GO--I WANTED THEM TO GO.



TOGETHER, WE WILL FORM A
NEW WORLD. I WILL LEAD MAN
AND ALIEN ALIKE TOWARD A
NEW GLORY, A NEW
BEGINNING--

THE ALIEN IS THE ONLY
ONE I CAN TRUST. THEIR
LOYALTY TRANSCENDS
HUMAN TREACHERY.

--A BETTER
TOMORROW!



SOME, OF COURSE,
WILL PERISH IN
THE TERRIBLE
STRUGGLE AHEAD.
I KNOW THAT. I
RESPECT IT.

--BUT IN THE
END, WE WILL
PREVAIL.

I CAN HEAR THE ADULATION
OF THE MASSES AS I
RESCUE THEM FROM THEIR
MISERY. I CAN HEAR THEIR
CRIES OF JOY AS I INSPIRE
THEM TO REBUILD OUR
WORLD.

I COULD FEEL THEIR
LOVE, THEIR
ADMIRATION--
THEIR FEAR.



WE WERE ON THE CUSP
OF A TRULY HISTORIC
MOMENT--WHEN THE
TIDE WOULD TURN
AGAINST THE HUMAN
DISORGANIZATION OF
THE PAST--

MY BOYS WOULD
MAKE US PROUD
AGAIN.

SQUAD--
COME TO
ORDER!

THE TIME
HAS COME TO PROVE
YOURSELVES--TO SHOW
YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER
ALL YOU HAVE LEARNED.

WE MUST
GIVE NO QUARTER.
THE OTHERS ARE
YOUR ENEMIES.
THEY MUST BE
DESTROYED!

ATTACK!

I
GAVE YOU
A DIRECT
ORDER!







THE
OLD GUARD MUST
BE OVERTHROWN--
THEY MUST BE
DEFEATED--!

I
SEE NOW--
SHE'S TRYING
TO TURN YOU
AGAINST
ME--

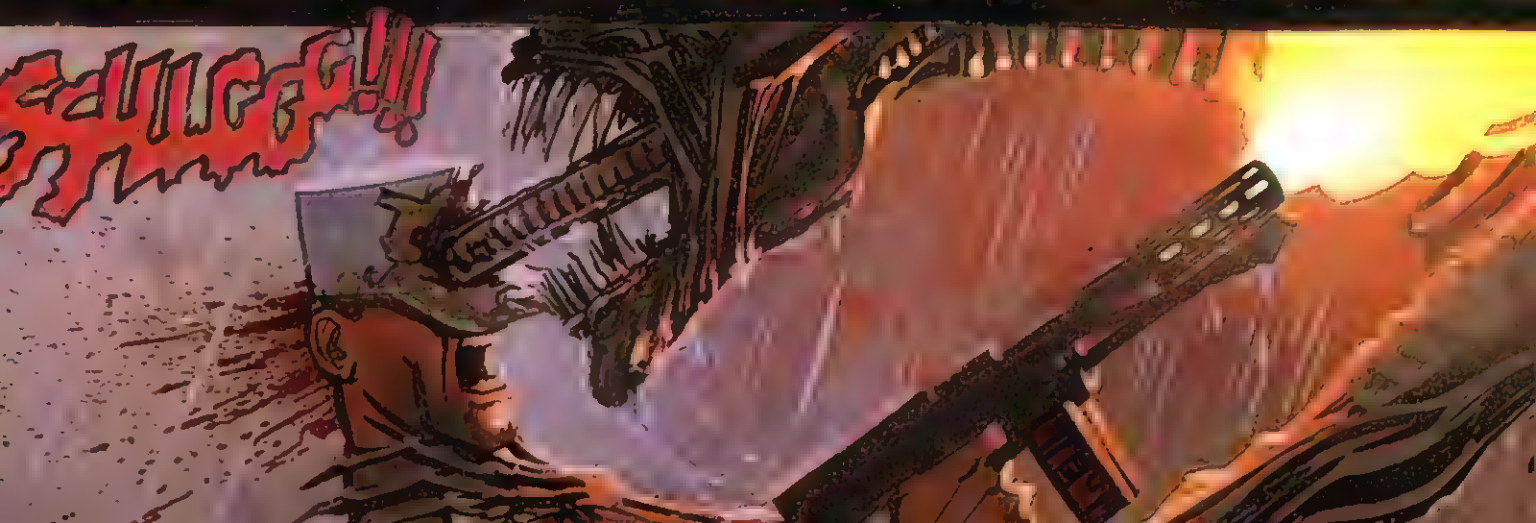


YOU
WANTED YOUR
PRECIOUS CHILDREN
BACK AND I--I
BROUGHT THEM
TO YOU--

MY GOD.
YOU USED
ME--

YOU
FILTHY
BITCH!

CRASH!!!



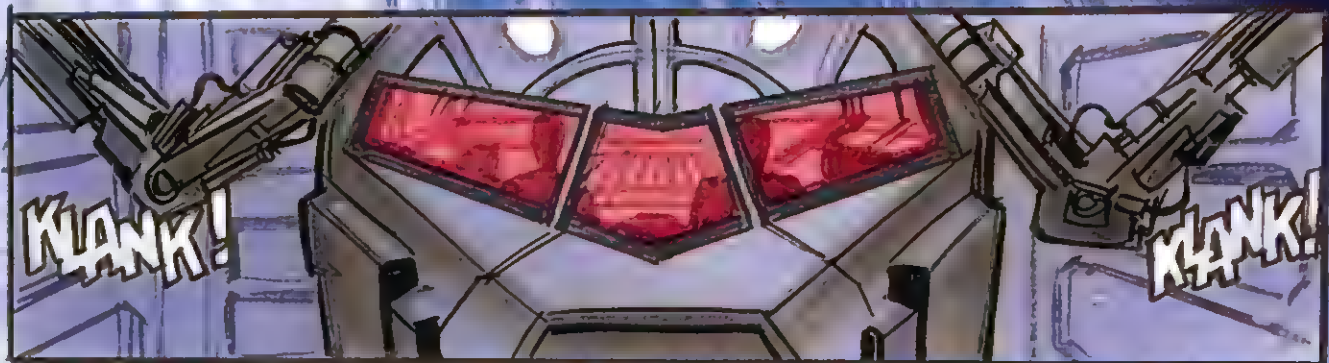


THEY TRACKED SPEARS' SHIP TO
EARTH--AND THEN THERE WAS
NOTHING. HIS REVOLUTION
ENDED BEFORE IT HAD A
CHANCE TO ***BEGIN.***

THE ALIEN WOULDN'T ALLOW IT.

GATEWAY STATION WAS ALL HUMANITY HAD LEFT. CIVILIAN TECHNICIANS MONITORED THE LAST, SPORADIC SIGNALS FROM EARTH IN A TERRIBLE SORT OF DEATHWATCH.

THE PLATFORM HAD BECOME AN OASIS FOR THE FEW SURVIVORS CAPABLE OF FINDING TRANSPORT.



THE ALIEN HAD REDUCED US TO VOYEURS, CATALOGING EARTH'S FINAL HOURS FROM THE SAFETY OF SPACE.

AND THEN I SAW HER. SHE WAS STILL ALIVE.

IS SOMEONE WATCHING US, UNCLE BURT? IS SOMEONE GOING TO HELP US--?

SHH, HONEY, I'M MAKING A REPORT.

RAY'S GONE. THE CITY'S GONE. MOST OF THOSE LEFT ALIVE HAVE BEEN SUBJUGATED TO THE ALIENS' WILL.

YOU CAN FEEL IT--SOME SORT OF SUBLIMINAL IMPULSE THAT DRAWS YOU TO THEM--A FEELING OF WARMTH, BELONGING--

EARTH TRANS

THE CREATURES ARE BUILDING SOME KIND OF NEST--SPREADING ACROSS THE CITY, INTO THE STREETS AND THE UNDERGROUND--

A REPOSITORY FOR THEIR YOUNG--OR SOMETHING MORE--?



IT
REMINDS ME
OF ANOTHER
TIME, YEARS
AGO--

ANOTHER
LITTLE GIRL
LOST ON A
WORLD
SWARMING
WITH THE
ALIEN
BASTARDS.

--RIPLEY?

I'M TIRED
OF
WATCHING.

IT'S
TIME TO
FINISH
IT.

FEMALE WAR



script

MARK VERHEIDEN

art

SAM KIETH

colors

DARK HORSE DIGITAL

lettering

PAT BROSSEAU

title illustration

JOHN BOLTON





PLANET LV-426--
ACHERON TERRA-
FORMING COLONY.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG,
I KNEW A LITTLE
GIRL NAMED REBECCA.

SHE HAD A DOLL NAMED
CASEY. THE TWO WOULD
STARE FOR HOURS AS
MANMADE STORMS BAT-
TERED THEIR TINY
SETTLEMENT.

THE ADULT COLONISTS FOUND THEIR
NEW ENVIRONMENT CRUEL AND UN-
RELENTING, BUT THE LITTLE GIRL
HAD KNOWN NOTHING ELSE. TO
HER, THE PLANET WAS HOME.

SHE ONLY WANTED
WHAT *ALL*
CHILDREN WANT--

--THE WARMTH
AND SECURITY
OF FAMILY--

--THE HUMAN CONNECTEDNESS
THAT COMES FROM *BELONGING*.

WHAT SHE GOT
WAS A NIGHTMARE
WITHOUT END.

NO--!





AS THE DEMONS
RAGED, REBECCA
BOUGHT SHELTER
IN THE COLD
STEEL MAZE
BENEATH THE
PLANET'S SURFACE

SHE LISTENED
FOR THE SCREAMS,
AND WHEN THEY
DIED...

SHE LISTENED
FOR THEM.

SHE WASN'T *MATURE* ENOUGH TO
UNDERSTAND THE TRUE *HORROR* OF
HER SITUATION. PERHAPS THAT WAS
ALL THAT SAVED HER.

THEN ONE DAY, THERE
WAS A NEW SOUND.
RESCUE.

TO THE CHILD'S EYE, THE SOLDIERS
WERE AS *AFRIGHENING* AS
THE MONSTERS--

--WITH THE EXCEP-
TION OF A CORPORAL
NAMED *HICKS* AND A
CIVILIAN OBSERVER
THEY CALLED *RIPLEY*.

HONEY--IT'S
OKAY--!

SHE WASN'T LIKE THE OTHERS.
SHE *UNDERSTOOD*.

OUT OF THE MARINES,
ONLY *HICKS* SURVIVED
--IF YOU COULD CALL
WHAT HAPPENED TO
HIM *SURVIVAL*.

THE ALIEN BLOOD
COULD BURN THROUGH
STEEL. IMAGINE WHAT
IT COULD DO TO A MAN'S
FACE...

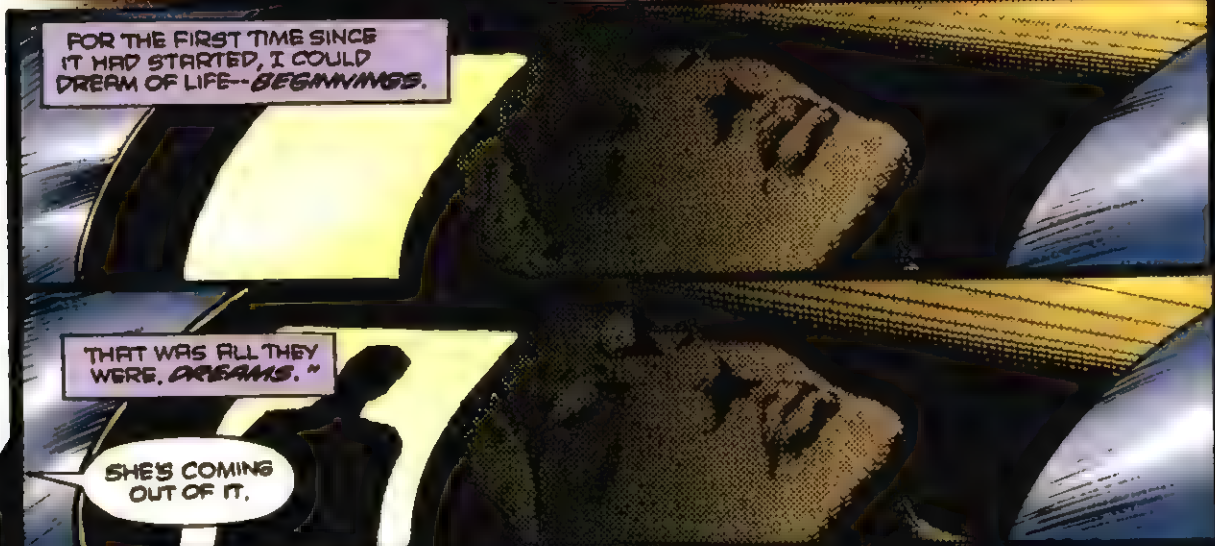
THROUGH IT ALL,
RIPLEY WAS *THERE*
FOR THE LITTLE GIRL.

AND IN THE END, SHE
PREVAILED.



I WATCHED YOU
AS YOU FELL TO
SLEEP--THEN I
WENT TO FIND
MY OWN
PEACE. IT WAS
OVER.

WE WERE
GOING HOME.



FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE
IT HAD STARTED, I COULD
DREAM OF LIFE--*BEGINNINGS*.

THAT WAS ALL THEY
WERE. *DREAMS*."

SHE'S COMING
OUT OF IT.

NEHHH
--HOW
LONG--

STILL
IS.

YOUR
MISSION'S
NOT OVER
YET.



ABOUT THREE
DAYS. YOU'LL START
FEELING BETTER
ONCE--

WHAT THE HELL
DO YOU MEAN,
"THREE DAYS"? TRA-
VEL TIME TO EARTH
IS *WEEKS*--

YOU
BASTARDS--

--YOU MISERABLE
BASTARDS.





...THE GOVERNMENT
DECIDED ONE SHIP JUST
WASN'T ENOUGH--

--SENT YOU
TO MAKE SURE
THE JOB GOT
DONE.

WHY THE HELL
ARE YOU *HERE*,
CAPTAIN
HANKERSON?

WE'VE BEEN
ANALYZING THE SULACO'S
TRANSMISSIONS FROM THE
TIME YOU ENTERED PLANETARY
ORBIT. YOU'RE GETTING
TO BE AN *EXPERT* ON
LV-426.

YEAH, THROUGH
ATTRITION.

NOT THAT IT
MATTERS. THE TERRA-
FORMING REACTOR WENT
CRITICAL AND *DUSTED* THE
PLACE JUST AFTER--

HARDLY. THE
FACILITY'S
HISTORY...

... BUT THAT'S
A CORPORATE
INSURANCE
PROBLEM.

WE'RE INTERESTED IN
SOMETHING *ELSE*.



DALLAS.

PARKER.

KANE.

NAMES
MEAN
ANYTHING
TO YOU?



YOU
KNOW THEY
DO.



THEY WERE
THE CREW OF MY
FIRST SHIP--THE
NOSTROMO.

WE--WE'D PICKED UP WHAT WE
THOUGHT WAS A *DISTRESS* SIGNAL
FROM LV-426. AFTER LANDING, DALLAS,
KANE, AND LAMBERT WENT OUT TO
INVESTIGATE. AND IT *STARTED*...



PER THE
CORPORATION, ALL
TAPES WERE *LOST*
AFTER YOU SELF-
DESTRUCTED THE
NOSTROMO.

I'VE GOT
SOMETHING TO
SHOW YOU.

CLICK



WHAT TH--? THAT'S
FROM KANE'S *HELMET*
CAMERA-- WHEN WE
DID OUR PRELIMINARY
RECON OF THE
DERELICT SHIP...

ALL THE
CORPORATE *BULL-*
SHIT ABOUT NO *PROOF*
--*CHRIST*-- EARTH'S
KNOWN THE TRUTH
ABOUT THE CREATURES
FROM THE *START*...

DOES THAT
SURPRISE
YOU?

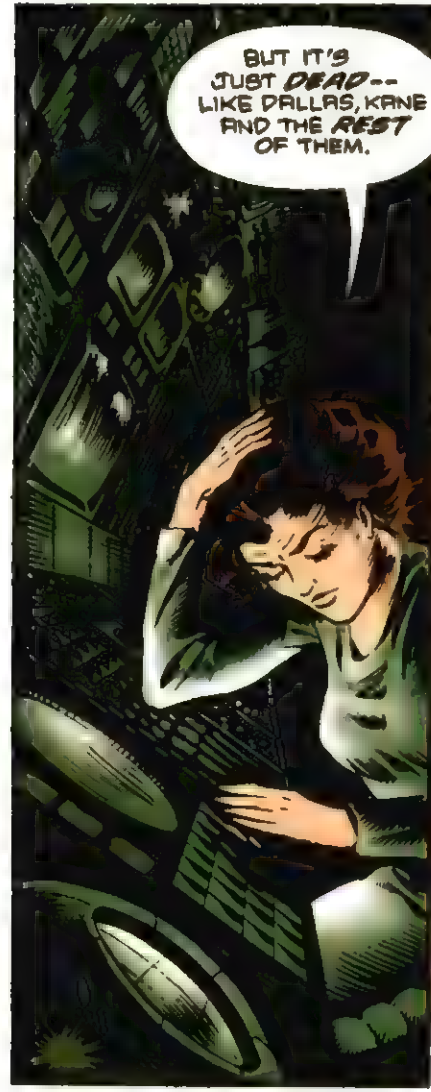
NO. I SUPPOSE
IT *DOESN'T*.



THE INBOARD SUIT RECORDERS LOGGED **EVERYTHING**. THE NOSTROMO'S **ANDROID** DUMPED THE DATA INTO THE ESCAPE POD'S COMPUTER LONG BEFORE YOU SLAGGED HIM AND BLEW THE MAIN SHIP.

WE ASSUME THIS... **CREATURE**... WAS INCUBATING THE ALIEN SPORE WHEN IT DIED.

COMMAND BELIEVES IT WAS SOME SORT OF **NAVIGATOR** OR **PILOT**--



BUT IT'S JUST **DEAD**-- LIKE DALLAS, KANE AND THE **REST** OF THEM.



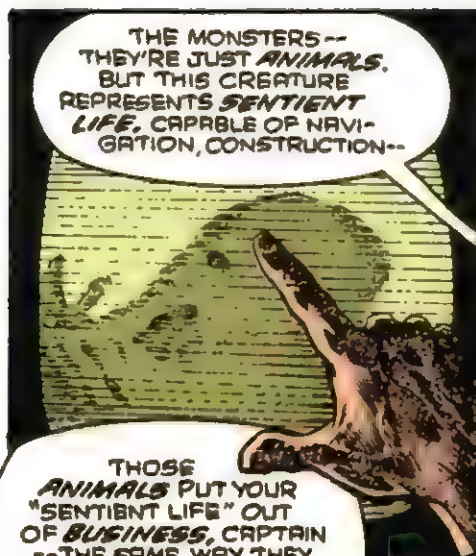
DID YOU WAKE ME UP FOR MY **ADVICE**? IT'S **REAL SIMPLE**.

IF **ACHERON'S** STILL **INTACT**-- IF **ANY** OF THOSE THINGS ARE STILL **ALIVE**...

... DROP A **NUKE** AND **WASTE** THEM.

SEE, I KNOW HOW THIS **ENDS**--

--THEY ALL **DIE**.



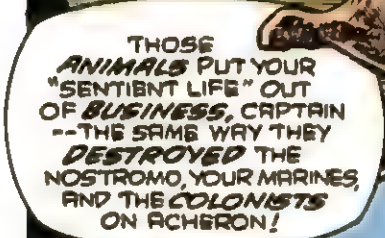
THE MONSTERS--
THEY'RE JUST *ANIMALS*.
BUT THIS CREATURE
REPRESENTS *SENTIENT*
LIFE. CAPABLE OF NAVI-
GATION, CONSTRUCTION--



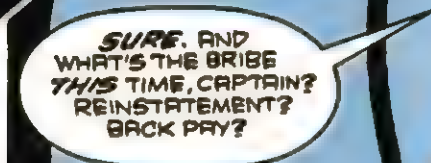
I MANAGED TO PULL A
PARTIAL TRANSLATION OF
THAT ALIEN SIGNAL BEFORE
EVERYTHING WENT TO HELL.
IT WAS NO DISTRESS SIGNAL.
IT WAS A *WARNING*.



I'M GOING TO
MAKE IT *EASY*
FOR YOU. THIS
IS A *SCIENTI-
FIC* EXPEDITION
--THAT'S *ALL*.
AND I NEED A
GUIDE.



THOSE
ANIMALS PUT YOUR
"SENTIENT LIFE" OUT
OF *BUSINESS*, CAPTAIN
--THE SAME WAY THEY
DESTROYED THE
NOSTROMO, YOUR MARINES,
AND THE *COLONISTS*
ON *ACHERON*!



SURE. AND
WHAT'S THE BRIBE
THIS TIME, CAPTAIN?
REINSTATEMENT?
BACK PAY?



I'M *NEVER*
GOING BACK--

--DISCUSSION
OVER.



YOU'RE
ACTING
LIKE YOU
HAVE A
CHOICE--



JESUS-- YOU
THINK YOU CAN *THREATEN*
ME? AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE
BEEN THROUGH--?

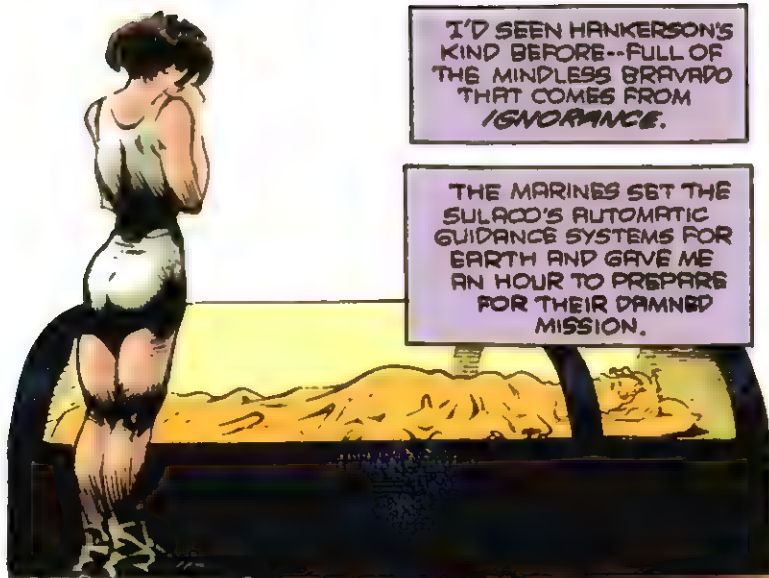


THREATEN?

NO.



BUT I'M
GOING TO HAVE
RELIABLE, FIRST-
PERSON INFORMA-
TION ON THIS
MISSION.



I'D SEEN HANKERSON'S
KIND BEFORE--FULL OF
THE MINDLESS BRAVADO
THAT COMES FROM
IGNORANCE.

THE MARINES SET THE
SULACO'S AUTOMATIC
GUIDANCE SYSTEMS FOR
EARTH AND GAVE ME
AN HOUR TO PREPARE
FOR THEIR DAMNED
MISSION.

I SPENT THOSE
LAST MINUTES
WITH YOU.



DON'T YOU SEE, NEWT?
I WOULD HAVE DONE
ANYTHING TO
PROTECT YOU...

PLAY ALONG WITH
HANKERSON'S 'EXPEDITION'
--RETURN TO FACE
THOSE *THINGS*--

TIME'S UP
--LET'S GO.



--EVEN
...*LEAVE*
YOU.



HANKERSON'S MARINES WERE SO MUCH LIKE THE OTHERS. I DIDN'T WANT TO GET CLOSE TO THEM. I *KNEW* THEY WERE GOING TO DIE."



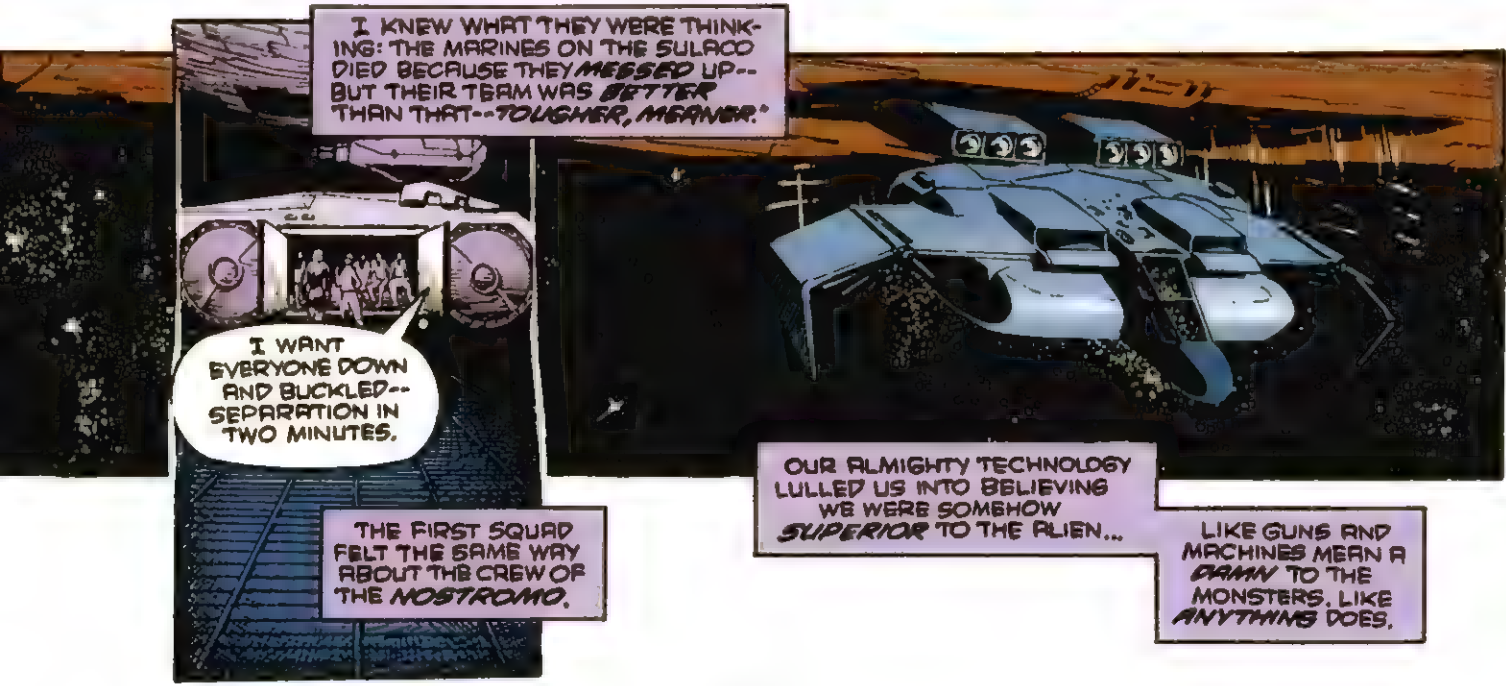
UHH, EXCUSE ME, MISS-- YOU SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THAT?



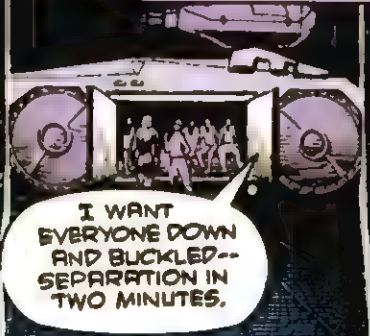
REGULATION DUCHAMP BLASTER--500 ROUND MAG WITH TWO IN-BOARD CLIPS, MEDIUM RECOIL, PISS POOR AT A DISTANCE BUT A REAL *MOTHER* UP CLOSE.



I THINK I CAN MANAGE.



I KNEW WHAT THEY WERE THINKING: THE MARINES ON THE SULACO DIED BECAUSE THEY *MESSED UP*-- BUT THEIR TEAM WAS *BETTER* THAN THAT--*TOUGHER, MEANER.*"

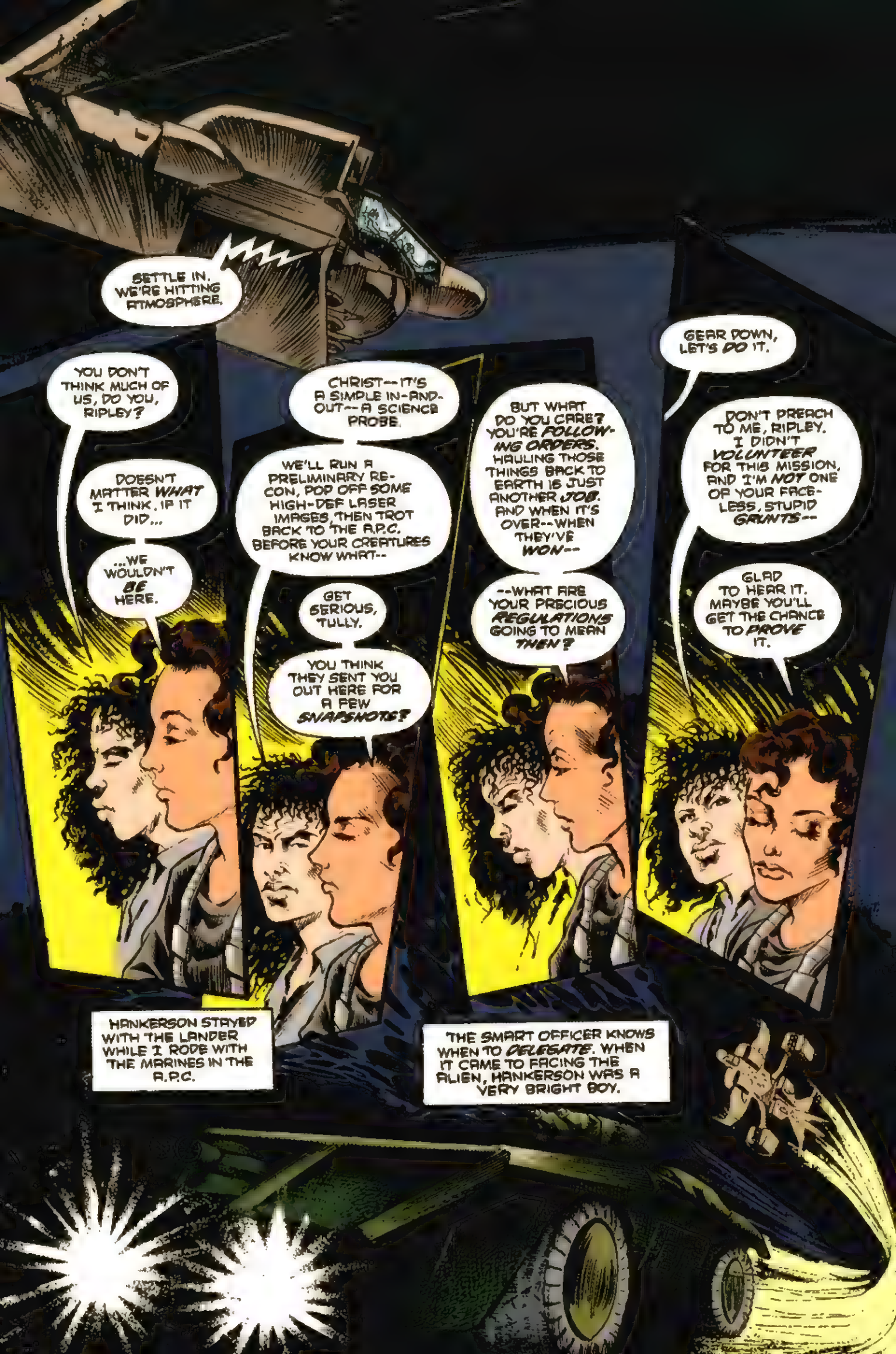


I WANT EVERYONE DOWN AND BUCKLED-- SEPARATION IN TWO MINUTES.

THE FIRST SQUAD FELT THE SAME WAY ABOUT THE CREW OF THE *NOSTROMO*.

OUR ALMIGHTY TECHNOLOGY LULLED US INTO BELIEVING WE WERE SOMEHOW *SUPERIOR* TO THE ALIEN...

LIKE GUNS AND MACHINES MEAN A *DAMN* TO THE MONSTERS. LIKE *ANYTHING* DOES.



SETTLE IN.
WE'RE HITTING
ATMOSPHERE.

YOU DON'T
THINK MUCH OF
US, DO YOU,
RIPLEY?

DOESN'T
MATTER *WHAT*
I THINK, IF IT
DID...

...WE
WOULDN'T
BE
HERE.

CHRIST--IT'S
A SIMPLE IN-AND-
OUT--A SCIENCE
PROBE.

WE'LL RUN A
PRELIMINARY RE-
CON, POP OFF SOME
HIGH-DEF LASER
IMAGES, THEN TROT
BACK TO THE A.P.C.
BEFORE YOUR CREATURES
KNOW WHAT--

GET
SERIOUS,
TULLY.

YOU THINK
THEY SENT YOU
OUT HERE FOR
A FEW
SNAPSHOTS?

BUT WHAT
DO YOU CARE?
YOU'RE *FOLLOW-*
ING ORDERS.
HAULING THOSE
THINGS BACK TO
EARTH IS JUST
ANOTHER *JOB.*
AND WHEN IT'S
OVER--WHEN
THEY'VE
WON--

--WHAT ARE
YOUR PRECIOUS
REGULATIONS
GOING TO MEAN
THEN?

GEAR DOWN,
LET'S DO IT.

DON'T PREACH
TO ME, RIPLEY.
I DIDN'T
VOLUNTEER
FOR THIS MISSION,
AND I'M *NOT* ONE
OF YOUR FACE-
LESS, STUPID
GRUNTS--

GLAD
TO HEAR IT.
MAYBE YOU'LL
GET THE CHANCE
TO *PROVE*
IT.

HANKERSON STAYED
WITH THE LANDER
WHILE I RODE WITH
THE MARINES IN THE
A.P.C.

THE SMART OFFICER KNOWS
WHEN TO *DELEGATE.* WHEN
IT CAME TO FACING THE
ALIEN, HANKERSON WAS A
VERY BRIGHT BOY.

THE MARINES WERE STILL DEALING WITH THE MISSION ON *THEIR* TERMS--SQUATING IT TO THEIR LOCK AND LOAD *DRILLS* BACK ON EARTH.

AS SOON AS THEY *SAW* IT, THEY BEGAN TO *UNDER-
STAND*.

THE SHOCK WAVE FROM RIPLEY'S BARBECUE KICKED THE SHIT OUT OF THIS THING.

IT'S PLAYING HELL WITH COMMUNICATIONS --WE'RE LOSING CONTACT WITH THE LANDER'S MAIN RELAY BOARD--



HINKERSON WANTED ME TO STAY WITH THE A.P.C. WHILE THE GRUNTS PULLED *POINT*. EVIDENTLY I WASN'T EXPENDABLE --YET.



COMMAND BELIEVES THERE MAY BE TRANSFERABLE NAVIGATIONAL DATA ABOARD THE ALIEN CRAFT.

JESUS GOD.

THEY COULD FEEL THE THINGS--WAITING.

IF IT'S HERE, WE'RE TO SECURE IT.

THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS EVEN EASIER. THEY WANT A LIVING SPECIMEN OF THE ALIEN BROUGHT BACK FOR STUDY.



SON OF A BITCH.

RIPLEY WAS RIGHT--

YEAH, THE MORE I HEAR, THE LESS I--





--LIKE IT.

OH JESUS.

MOVEMENT,
FIFTY YARDS.

RIPLEY--
TALK TO ME,
DAMN IT--!

SOME OF THEM
MUST HAVE *SURVIVED*
THE EXPLOSION AND
RETURNED TO THE
DERELICT--

DON'T *PUSH* IT,
SERGEANT-- YOU'RE SAFER
OUTSIDE, ON OPEN
GROUND--

[Static]--
THIS IS HANKERSON.
YOU WILL NOT EVACUATE
UNTIL I GIVE--*[Static]*

RIPLEY IS *[Static]*--
--TACTICAL ADVICE-- I
AM IN COMMAND OF THIS--



WE'RE LOSING THE
LANDER'S SIGNAL, BUT I
THINK YOU GET THE
DRIFT.
LET'S MAKE THIS
QUICK AND
PAINLESS.

FORTY YARDS,
CLOSING.



DAMN IT, SERGEANT,
THEY *KNOW* YOU'RE
THERE!



YOU'VE
GOT TO GET
AWAY FROM--



CREEPY



AGHH--!



UMMPH!

CRUNCH CRUMPH



MASTERS--

ARE
YOU--?

CAN'T
--CAN'T
MOVE MY
LEGS--
CAN'T--

IT STARTED
SLOWLY--
AN ELECTRO-
MAGNETIC
SYNTHESIS
I CAN'T
PRETEND TO
UNDERSTAND.

OH
GOD--

THE MARINE MUST
HAVE TRIGGERED
SOME SORT OF
POWER SOURCE
INSIDE THE ALIEN
VESSEL.

IT WAS MORE
THAN SIMPLE
ENERGY-- IT WAS
AN INTUITIVE,
LIVING *FORCE*
--IT TOOK
CONTROL OF
THE A.P.C.'S
SYSTEMS, RE-
PROGRAMMING
THE TRACTOR'S
'SMART' COMPUT-
ERS TO UNDER-
STAND A NEW
LANGUAGE.

IT FOLLOWED
HIS LIFE-
SUPPORT
SIGNAL LIKE
AN ELECTRONIC
SNAKE,
ENTERING
THE A.P.C.'S
COMMUNICA-
TIONS DECK.

WHAT
IN--?

THE READ-OUTS
FLICKERED WITH A
LITANY OF
INDECIPHERABLE
INFORMATION--
ALL THAT WAS
LEFT OF THE DEAD
PILOT'S MIND.

OUR MACHINES USE SCREENS
AND VISUAL *READ-OUTS* TO
DELIVER DATA. THE DERELICT'S
COMPUTERS WENT STRAIGHT
TO THE *SOURCE*.

IT *SPOKE*
TO ME.

OLNEY!
RIPLEY!

WHAT THE
HELL'S GOING ON
DOWN THERE?

IT WAS THE
REST OF THE
**DISTRESS
SIGNAL**
I'D PICKED UP
ABOARD THE
NOSTROMO--
EXCEPT THIS
TIME I COULD
UNDER-
STAND.



I SAW TELE-
METRY INFOR-
MATION, STAR
CHARTS, TAN-
GENTIAL
**REFERENCE
POINTS.**

THE PILOT OF THE
DERELICT SHIP HAD
DISCOVERED THE
ALIENS' GENESIS--
THE SOURCE OF
THEIR **POWER.**

--I FELT HER
STRENGTH,
HER UTTER
SUPREMACY.

WE ASSUMED THE
ALIEN INFESTATIONS
WERE SPORADIC,
ARBITRARY--
THAT THEY BRED
WHEREVER
CONVENIENT, LIKE
SOME HORRIBLE
CANCERS.

WE WERE
WRONG. THEY
MOVE WITH
PURPOSE.

SHE'S CALLING HER
CHILDREN **BACK**
TO HER."

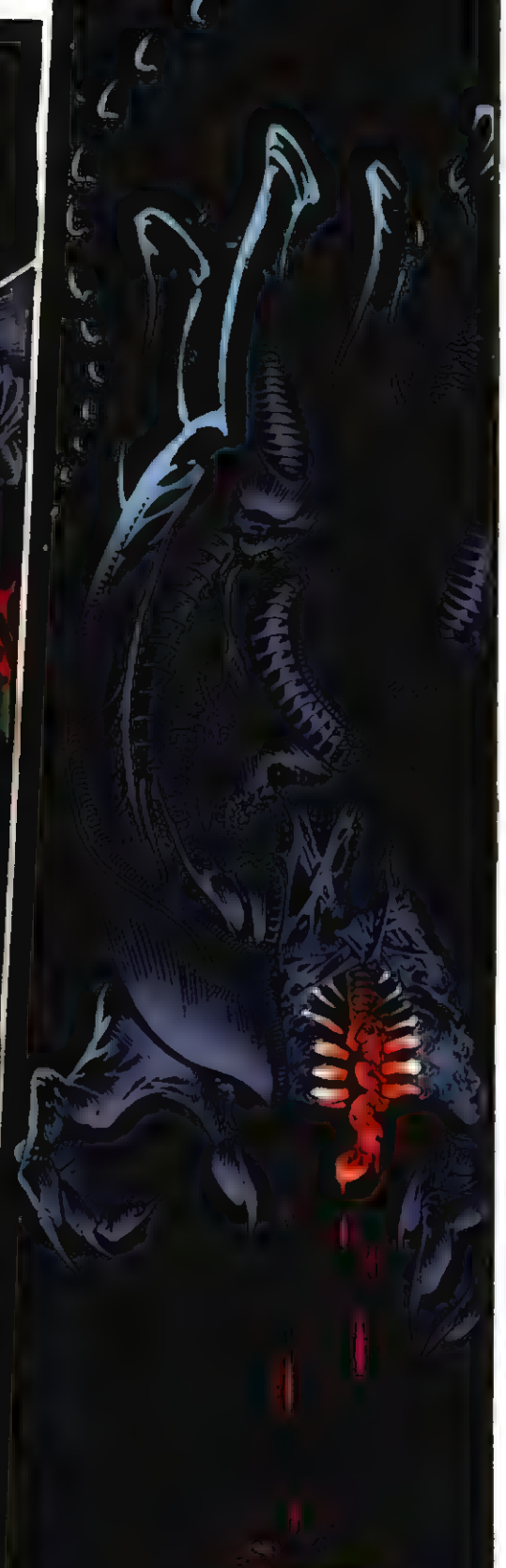


TEN YARDS...

DAMN IT,
SERGEANT, THEY'RE
ALMOST ON TOP
OF US--!

MASTERS
--GIVE ME
YOUR HAND
--I'LL PULL
YOU--

UCCCKK--!





CONCENTRATE
YOUR FIRE, DAMN
IT! THE HULL'S
ALREADY--

GET DOWN!

SUDDENLY IT
STOPPED. I FELT
THE ALIEN IMAGES
DRIFTING AWAY,
LEAVING ONLY A
PIERCING, HOLLOW
ROAR--

UGGHH--

NOOOO--!

SON OF A
BITCH--

--THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!

--THE RESIDUAL HUM
OF THE DEAD ONE'S
LAST WHISPERS.



I KNEW.



RIPLEY--
I CAN'T BRING
UP THE SQUAD--
THE SIGNAL'S
BEEN JAMMED
BY--

WHAT TH--?
WHAT'S WRONG
WITH YOU--?



IT--IT WASN'T
INTENDED
FOR US--

--WE INTERCEPTED
THE MESSAGE--IT WAS AN
ACCIDENT--IT WAS--



WHAT DID
YOU SEE?

COURSE
TRAJECTORIES,
STAR FIELDS--
THE ALIENS'
GENESIS:

A MOTHER'S
DESIRE...



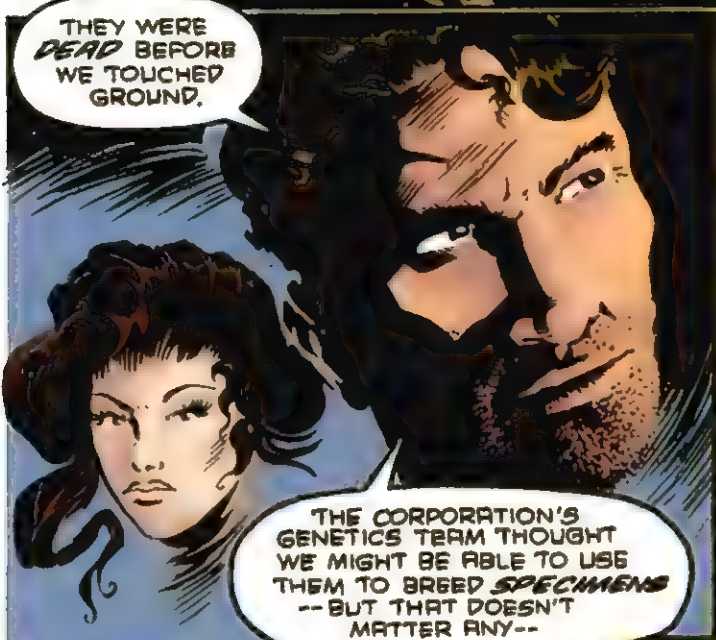
THIS IS
BETTER THAN
I EVER
DREAMED...

DO YOU HAVE
ANY IDEA WHAT YOUR
INFORMATION IS
WORTH?



ONCE WE GET BACK TO THE HARRISON, WE'LL TRANSMIT THE COORDINATES BACK TO EARTH, THEY'LL HAVE A SHIP ARMED AND READY WITHIN HOURS--

WAIT-- WHAT ABOUT THE SQUAD--?



THEY WERE DEAD BEFORE WE TOUCHED GROUND.

THE CORPORATION'S GENETICS TEAM THOUGHT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE THEM TO BREED SPECIMENS -- BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER ANY--



DUKKE!



MATTERS TO ME, YOU LITTLE SHIT.



THE OTHERS ARE DEAD. JOIN THE CLUB.



THE CORPORATION WAS FILLED WITH MEN LIKE HANKERSON. IF THEY FOUND A WAY TO CONTROL THE ALIEN, IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY UNLEASHED THE THINGS ON EARTH.

PUNCH UP THE HARRISON'S COORDINATES-- THEN LOCK ON- TO THE A.P.C.'S FUEL SYSTEM.

LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.

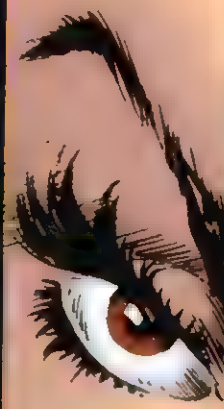


I HAD SEEN WHAT THE CORPORATION WOULD DO TO RETRIEVE *ONE* OF THE CREATURES. IMAGINE WHAT THEY WOULD DO TO TRACK AN ENTIRE *PLANET*.

WE DETONATED THE A.P.C. FROM ORBIT, TERMINATING THE LAST OF THE CORPORATION'S 'SPECIMENS.'

IT WOULD TAKE WEEKS FOR A SECOND MILITARY VESSEL TO REACH ACHERON--BUT IT *WOULD* COME.

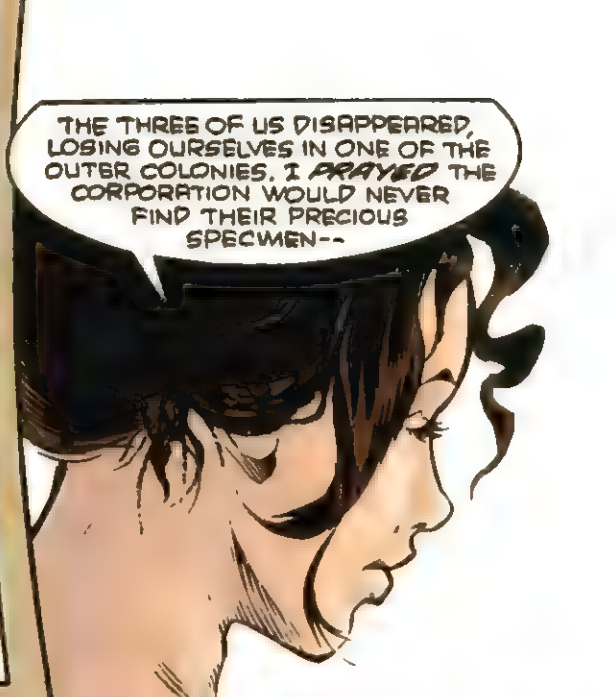
SOONER OR LATER THEY WOULD PIECE TOGETHER WHAT HAPPENED. SOONER OR LATER THEY'D COME FOR ME.





EVERYTHING WAS SO COMPLICATED. I KEPT THINKING OF YOU, NEWT-- BUT I COULDN'T FORGET HANKERSON'S MISSION--

--OR THE IDEA OF THOSE ALIEN THINGS ON EARTH.



THE THREE OF US DISAPPEARED, LOSING OURSELVES IN ONE OF THE OUTER COLONIES. I *PRAYED* THE CORPORATION WOULD NEVER FIND THEIR PRECIOUS SPECIMEN--



--BUT OF COURSE THEY DID.

SO MUCH FOR PRAYERS.

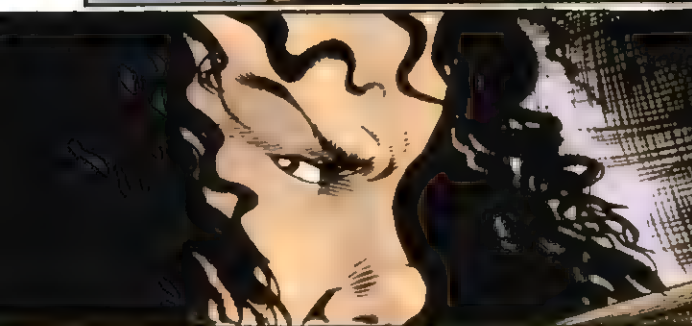


SO YOU'VE COME BACK TO *SAVE* US.

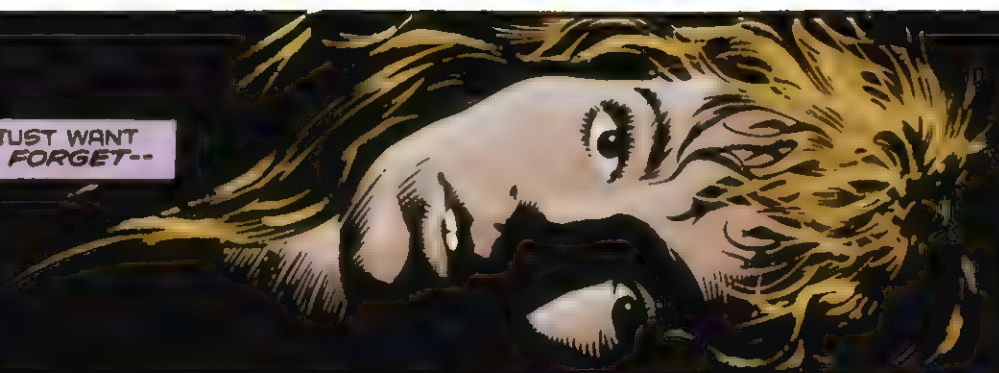
AND HOW THE HELL ARE YOU GOING TO DO *THAT*?



BY GOING TO RIPLEY'S GENESIS WORLD AND *USING* THE ALIEN THE WAY IT'S BEEN USING *US*--



--THEN BLOWING THE UGLY BASTARDS STRAIGHT TO HELL.



AT NIGHT, I JUST WANT
TO SLEEP, TO FORGET--



--BUT, AT
NIGHT, I'M
STILL A
LITTLE GIRL.



I RETURN
TO THE PLANET
RIM-- TO
THE HELL OF
MY YOUTH.



THE ALIEN
TOOK ME
AND PULLED
ME INTO
ITS NEST.



AIEEE--!

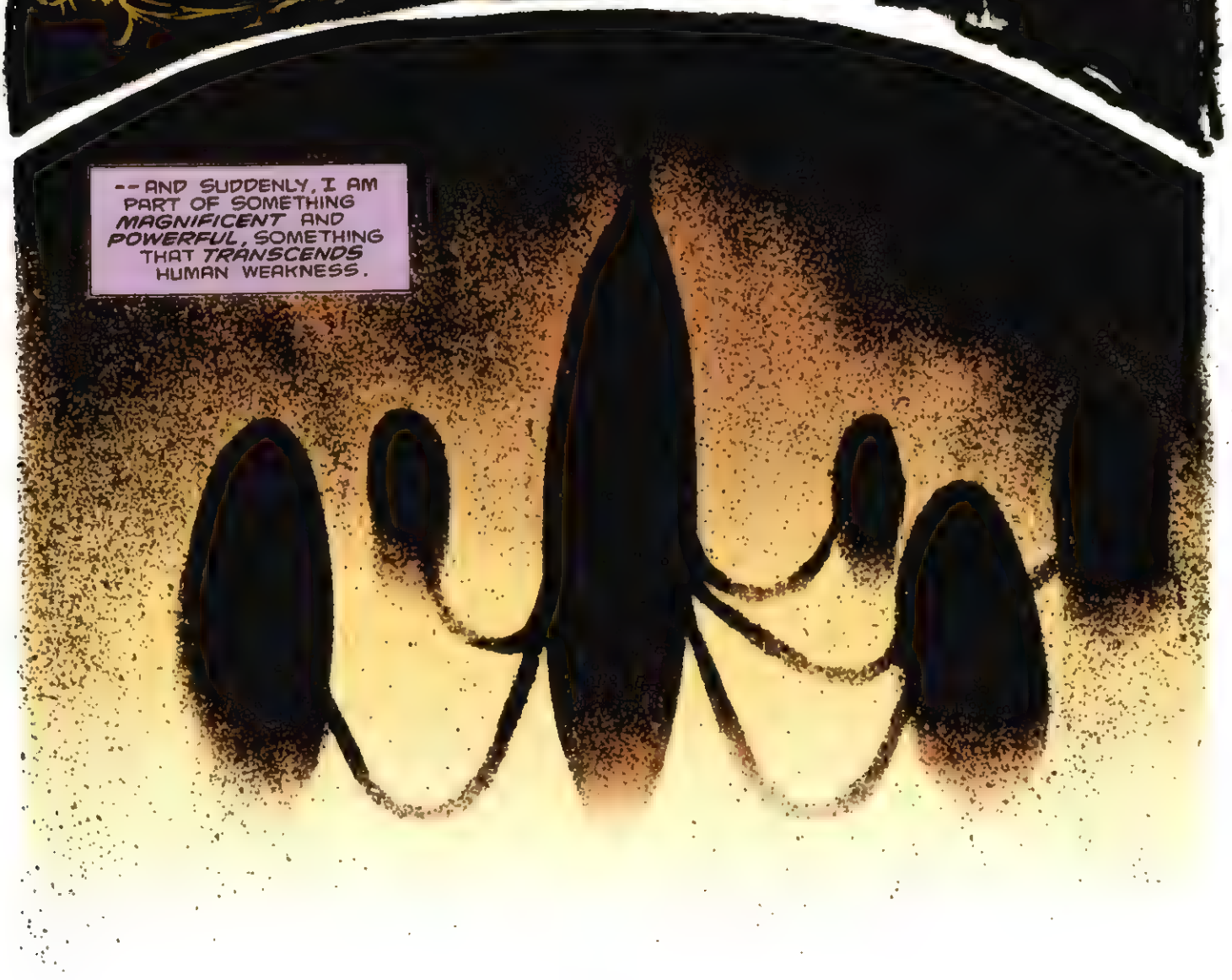


IT'S ALWAYS
THE SAME.

THE ALIEN
HONORS
ME WITH ITS
SEED --

--WITH ITS
DARKNESS--

-- AND SUDDENLY, I AM
PART OF SOMETHING
MAGNIFICENT AND
POWERFUL, SOMETHING
THAT TRANSCENDS
HUMAN WEAKNESS.





THAT'S WHEN
I *SEE* HER.



SHE'S NOT OF
RIM--SHE'S
NOT OF *ANY*
WORLD.



SHE TAKES ROOT WHERE
IT *SERVES* HER, SPREADING
HER PROGENY LIKE SOME
MALIGNANT *DISEASE*.



BY NIGHT, SHE IS
THE MONSTER THAT
CONSUMES ME.

BY DAY, SHE IS
THE ONE WHO
WAITS FOR ME.

"DADDY? ARE WE GOING TO DIE?"

VIA SATELLITE LINK

C'MON, DAMN IT--

"WE--WE ALL DIE SOME- DAY, HONEY. IT'S THE WAY OF THINGS."

"BUT IT'S DIFFERENT NOW, ISN'T IT?"

"IT'S ALL DIFFERENT, AMY. I WISH YOU COULD HAVE SEEN IT *BEFORE*, WHEN YOUR MOTHER..."

"...WHEN SHE WAS STILL--"

"I STILL *SEE* MOMMY WHEN I SLEEP. SHE TELLS ME TO BE A GOOD GIRL. SHE TELLS ME SHE LOVES ME."

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS-- MIDSUMMER AND IT'S 30 DEGREES...

...WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?

DON'T KNOW WHY WE BOTHER.

THERE'S NOBODY LEFT. NOBODY TO SEE.

ONLY A MATTER OF *TIME* BEFORE THOSE THINGS KILL US...

...OR *BREED* US, LIKE THOSE OTHER POOR BASTARDS.

I'LL *BREED* MY GODDAMN BRAINS INTO A WALL BEFORE I LET THEM TOUCH ME.

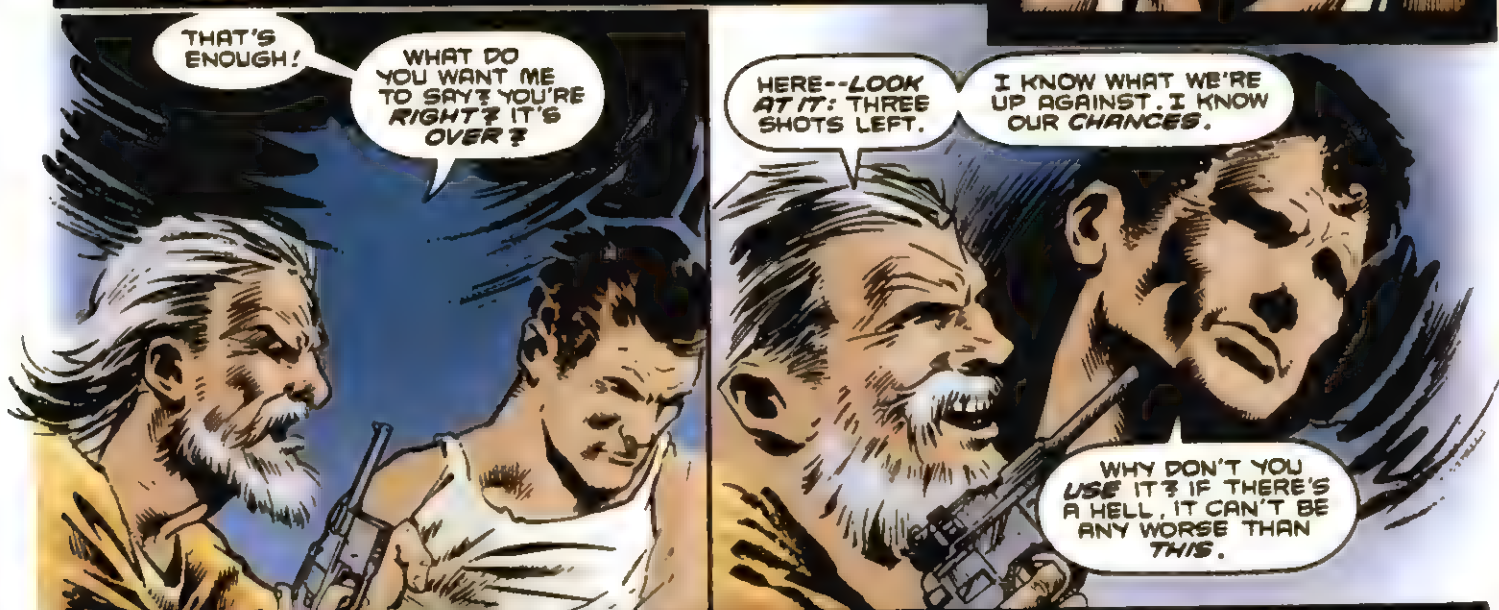
SOMETIMES I THINK I'VE BEEN *BAD*. AND THAT'S WHY THE MONSTERS CAME --

--*THAT'S* WHY THEY TOOK MOMMY FROM US.

AMY, NO...

BEN, GIVE ME A HAND--!





"... I CAN
FEEL IT."

EXCUSE
ME--

--YOU ASKED
TO BE NOTIFIED
IF WE STARTED
RECEIVING OVER
EARTH-SAT 19...



...DON'T ASK ME HOW,
BUT WE'RE PICKING UP
SOME SORT OF PRE-RE-
CORD FROM AN EARTH-
SIDE SWITCHING STATION.

I'LL BE
RIGHT
THERE.



SOMEHOW I
KNEW SHE WAS
STILL ALIVE.

AUTOSCANNER
PICKED IT UP. I QUIT
TRACKING THEM DAYS
AGO. THEY MUST HAVE
FOUND A WAY TO TAP
INTO THE GROUND
RELAYS--



--SOMEBODY
DOWN THERE
REALLY WANTS
TO TALK.

WE'D NEVER MET, BUT
I KNEW HER, KNEW
WHAT SHE WAS THINKING,
WHAT SHE WAS FEELING--



--I KNEW THE SHRILL SOUND
OF HER SCREAMS.



WE TRIED STAYING ABOVE
GROUND, BUT SO MANY HAVE BEEN
TAKEN BY THE ALIEN. THEY--THEY
IDENTIFY WITH THE CREATURES...



...HUNTING
US TO APPEASE
THEIR NEW
MASTER.

...THEY'RE USING
THE UNDERGROUND TO
MOVE FREELY BENEATH
THE CITY. THE TUNNELS AND
GRIDS ARE STILL HERE, BUT
CHANGED--TRANSFORMED.

MUCH OF WHAT OCCURRED ON RIM HAS BECOME A *BLUR*-- TIME'S SOFTENED THE MEMORY INTO A SWIRL OF *BLOOD* AND *SHADOW*.

IT--IT'S DIFFICULT TO BE SURE, BUT THE TUNNELS APPEAR TO CONVERGE INTO A CENTRAL *LOCUS*-- LIKE *SPOKES* ON A *WHEEL*.

THE INNOCENCE OF YOUTH IS BOTH A *STRENGTH* AND A *WEAKNESS*.

WE'RE COMING CLOSER TO THE *HUB*. THERE ARE MORE BODIES NOW, FUSED INTO THE WALLS LIKE MAD *SCULPTURE*.

THERE IS TIME TO *HEAL*-- BUT YOU HAVE THE SAME LONG YEARS TO *REMEMBER*. TO *DREAM*.

I USED TO WONDER WHY THEY RECLAIMED THEMSELVES-- FILLED THEIR WORLD WITH THE DECAY OF DEATH. THEN I REALIZED --

--THEY'RE *IMMERSED* IN DEATH. THEY *SURROUND* THEMSELVES WITH IT.

PERHAPS THAT TERRIBLE, SHEER *FINALITY* IS THE ONLY THING THEY TRULY UNDERSTAND.

JESUS, PAUL-- DO YOU *HEAR* THAT?

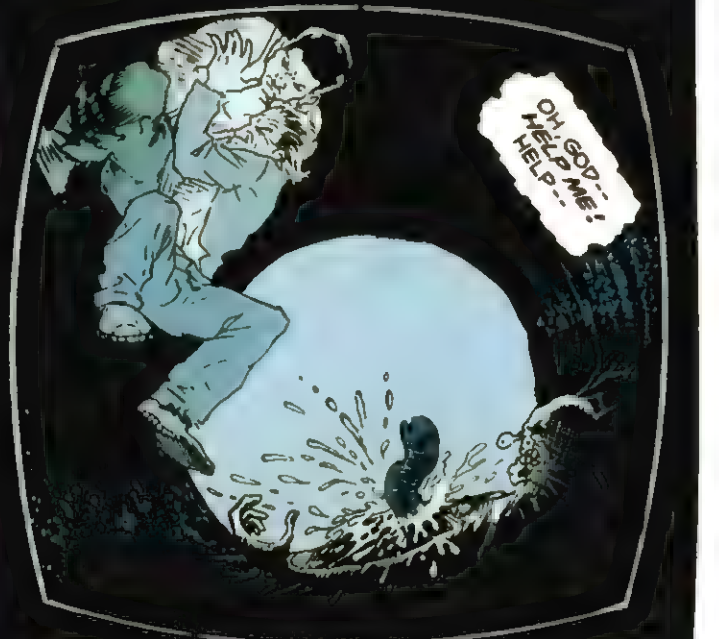


" WE--WE HEARD
STORIES FROM OTHER
CITIES ABOUT THE
ALIEN BREEDERS.
DOZENS WERE FOUND
AND DESTROYED,
BACK WHEN WE STILL
HAD *HOPE*."

" BUT THEY SAID
THE CREATURES
BRED IN ISOLATION,
TO *PROTECT* THE
NASCENT EGGS."

" THIS ONE'S
EXPOSED, IN
THE OPEN,
AS IF--"

"--AS IF SHE'S
WAITING FOR
SOMETHING."







NOT AGAIN!

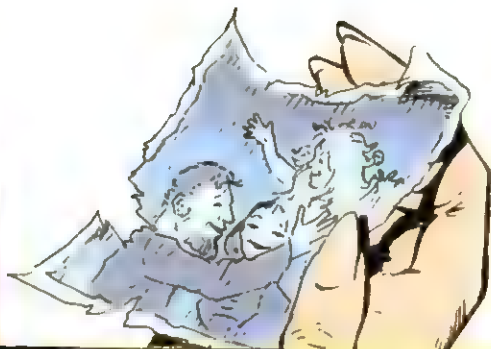
I WANTED TO STEAL A SHIP, A TRANSPORT, ANYTHING.



WHERE IS IT--?

I COULDN'T BEAR TO WATCH IT HAPPEN AGAIN.

BUT I KNEW THE CHILD'S ONLY HOPE WAS RIPLEY'S WAY-- IT WAS THE ONLY HOPE FOR ANY OF US.



EVERYONE I'VE EVER LOVED HAS BEEN TAKEN BY THE ALIEN.



NOT THIS TIME.



JESUS, RIPLEY, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE **SERIOUS**--

--YOU WANT TO PUT BACK INTO SPACE BECAUSE OF SOME DAMNED **DREAM**?

IT'S MORE THAN A DREAM, WILKS. SHE'S **REAL**.

SO WHAT IF SHE IS?

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF **SUICIDE MISSIONS**!

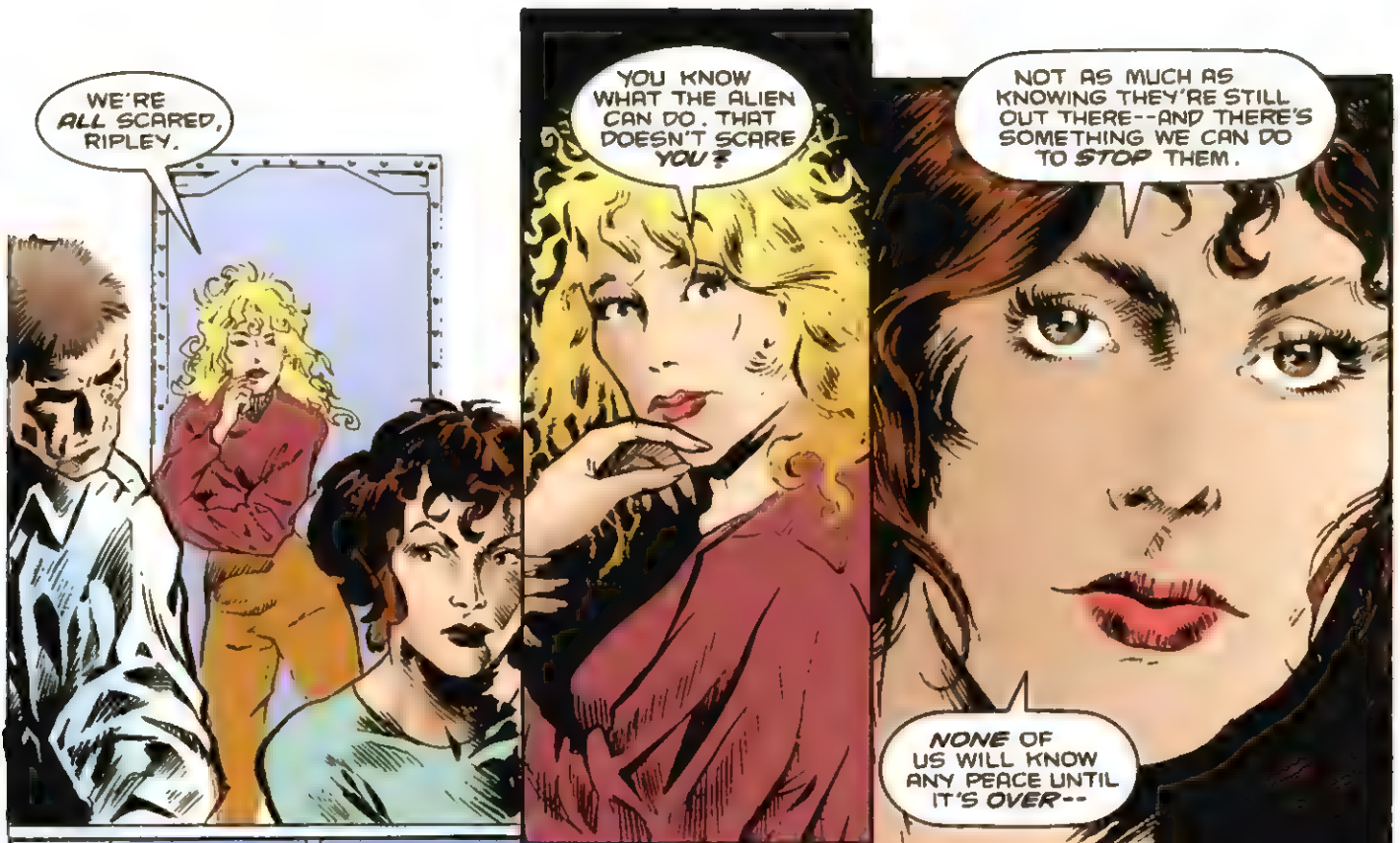
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?



I'M TALKING ABOUT THOSE **THINGS**! WE'VE BEEN **LUCKY** SO FAR, BUT THAT'S BOUND TO RUN OUT...

...KEEP PUSHING AND WE'LL ALL END UP DEAD, OR **WORSE**.

YOU'RE **SCARED**.



WE'RE
ALL SCARED,
RIPLEY.

YOU KNOW
WHAT THE ALIEN
CAN DO. THAT
DOESN'T SCARE
YOU?

NOT AS MUCH AS
KNOWING THEY'RE STILL
OUT THERE--AND THERE'S
SOMETHING WE CAN DO
TO STOP THEM.

NONE OF
US WILL KNOW
ANY PEACE UNTIL
IT'S OVER--



SO NOW YOU
WANT TO TAKE THE
OFFENSIVE.

EARTH'S GONE,
OVERRUN BY THOSE
DAMNED THINGS. WHAT'S
CHANGED?

NOTHING.

EVERY-
THING.

I'VE SPENT
THE LAST
FIFTEEN YEARS
SEEING HER--
FEELING HER--

--HOPING
THE VISIONS
WOULD
STOP.



WHAT ABOUT
YOU, BILLIE?
ARE YOU BUYING
INTO RIPLEY'S
NIGHTMARE--?

I DON'T
HAVE ANY
CHOICE.

THIS ISN'T
ABOUT ME
ANYMORE



WE SHOULD
BE FINISHED BY
TONIGHT, BUT--

--I DON'T
GET IT. WHAT'S
YOUR "RIPLEY"
PLANNING TO
TRANSPORT IN
THIS THING?

WE--
WE'RE NOT
EXACTLY
SURE.

DON'T GET ME
WRONG--IT'S *ALL* BEEN
SEAT-OF-THE-PANTS
SINCE THOSE THINGS CUT
OUR EARTHSIDE SUPPLY
LINE--

-- BUT NO REAL
SPECS. NO DIMENSIONS.
NO WEIGHT PROJECTIONS?
THAT'S *PUSHING* IT.

YOU KNOW
AS MUCH AS
WE DO.

THEN NOBODY
KNOWS SHIT,
DO THEY?

C'MON, GUYS--
GIVE ME A BREAK. YOU'RE
SETTING SOMETHING UP
OFF-WORLD, RIGHT? NEW
COLONY, SPACE STATION,
WHAT?

ARE YOU A
RELIGIOUS
MAN, MCFEE?

NEVER
HAD MUCH
USE FOR
IT. WHY?

I'M LEARNING
IT'S IMPORTANT
TO BELIEVE IN
SOMETHING--
ANYTHING--

--EVEN
DREAMS.



WE'RE AS
CRAZY AS RIPLEY--
FLYING HALFWAY TO
HELL, AND FOR
WHAT?



EVEN IF
THIS THING
EXISTS, WHO SAYS
WE'LL BE ABLE
TO *CATCH*
IT?



HERE--
RIPLEY CONVINCED
THE BASE COMMANDER
TO *HOLD THEM*
WHILE SHE ARRANGED
FOR A SHIP.



STOREROOM'S
BEEN UNDER
LOCK AND KEY
EVER SINCE. SEEMS
EVEN THE *IDEA*
OF HAVING THEM
ABOARD GIVES THE
RANK AND FILE
THE JITTERS.



THEY'RE
DEAD.

DOESN'T THE
CREW *UNDER-*
STAND THAT?

SURE. I
GUESS--CHRIST,
I DON'T
KNOW--



--SOME-
TIMES I'M
NOT SURE
I DO.

WE BEND THE TRUTH TO ACCOMMODATE OUR HUMAN WEAKNESS, WHEREAS THE ALIEN MERELY... ADAPTS.

BILLIS-- HERE.

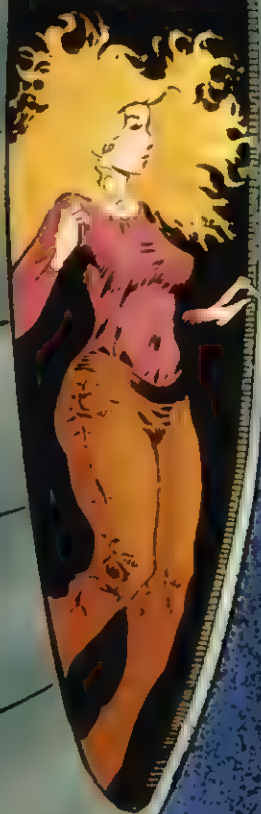
RIPLEY--!

HOW-- HOW MANY DID YOU--?

ENOUGH.

RIPLEY HAD ASKED ME TO MEET HER IN THE SPACE STATION'S DRY DOCK TO COMPLETE PREPARATIONS FOR LAUNCH.

FUNNY. WE CLING TO OUR PRIMITIVE CYCLE OF DAY AND NIGHT, THE RITUAL OF THE SUN--BUT IT'S ALWAYS DARK IN SPACE.



GOD--!

THEY BROUGHT UP A COUPLE DOZEN SPECIMENS--

-- IN ORDER TO RUN BIOLOGICAL AND WEAPONS TESTS --

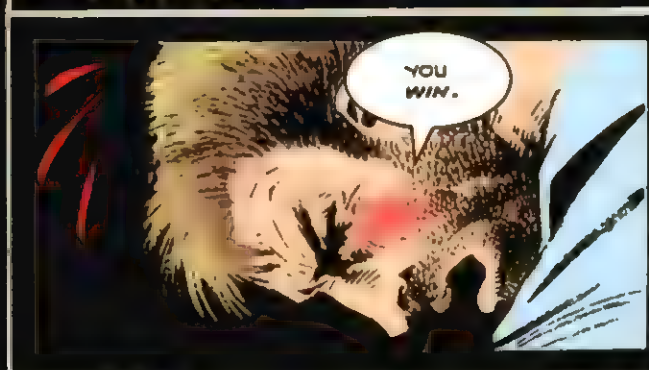
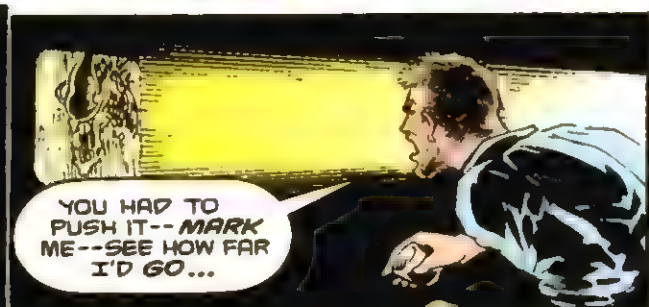
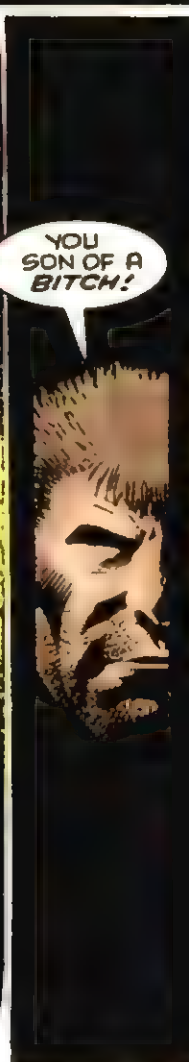
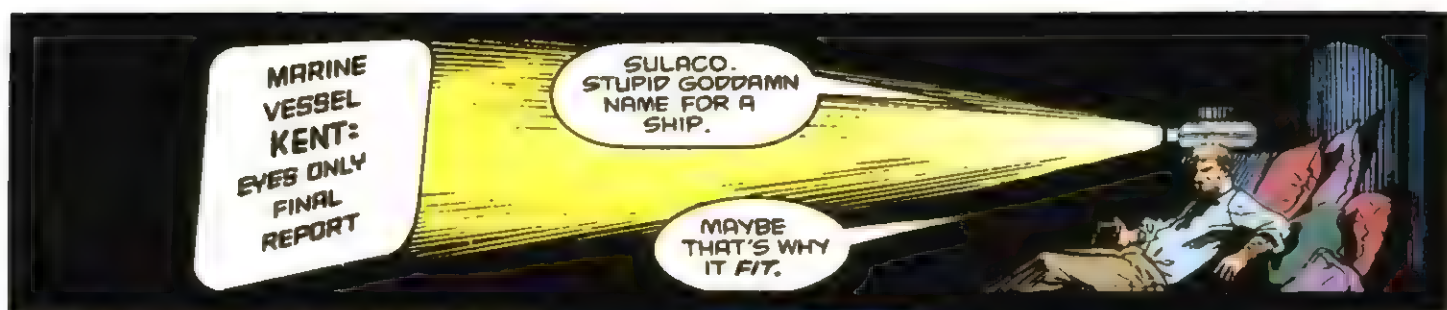
-- BEFORE EVERYTHING WENT TO HELL.

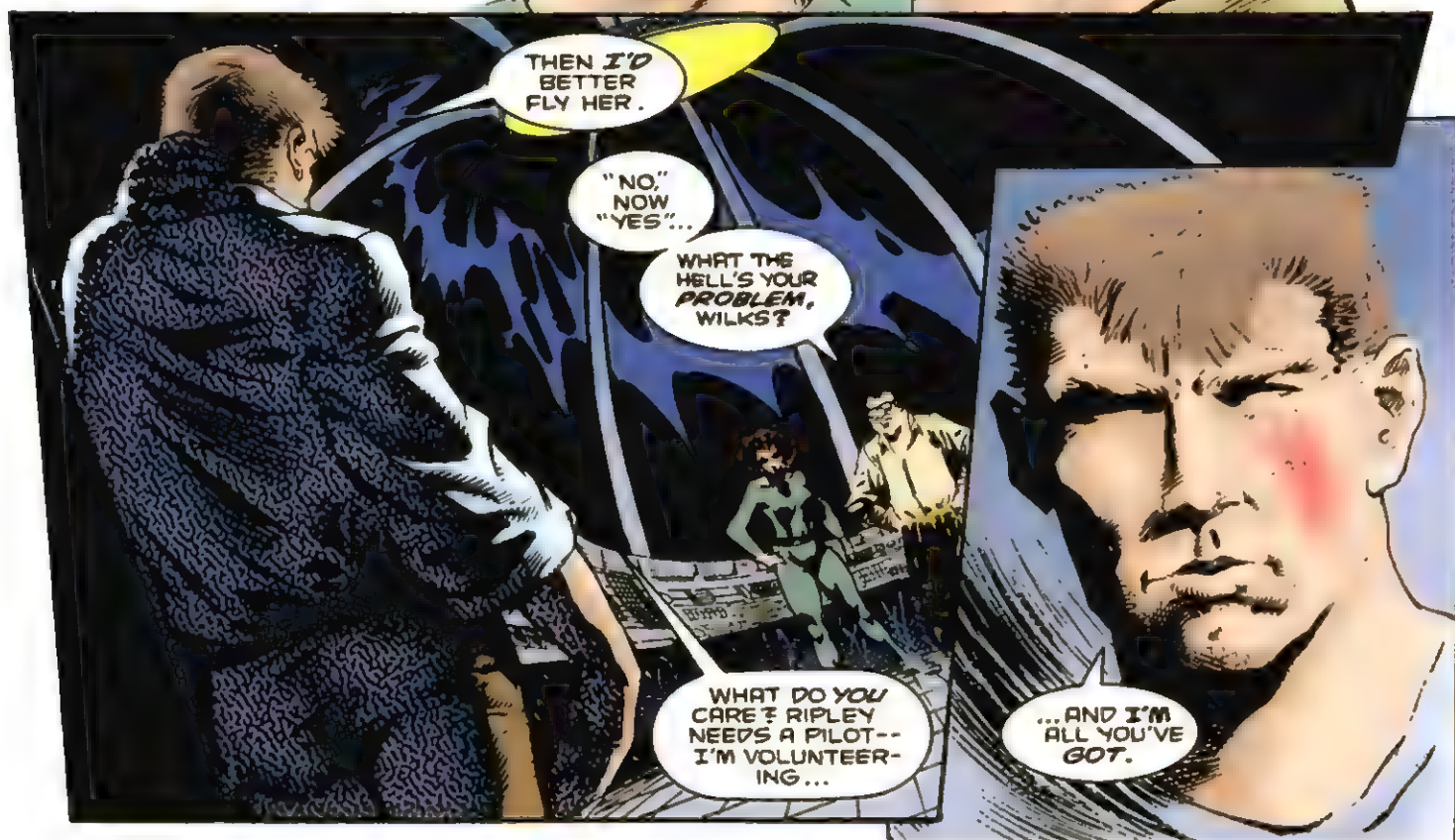
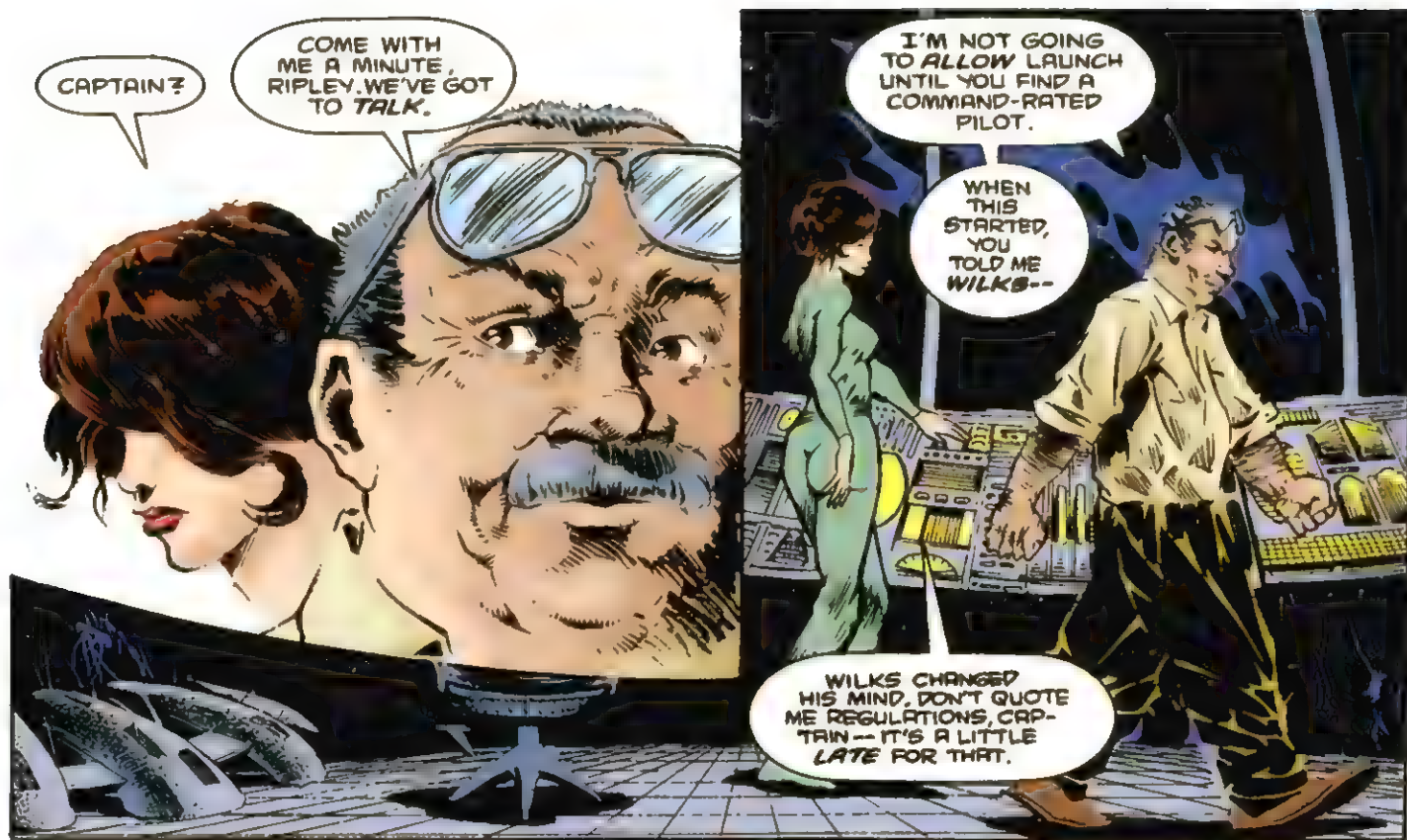
THEY'RE BORN UGLY AND THEY STAY UGLY.

SNIK!

LET'S DO IT.









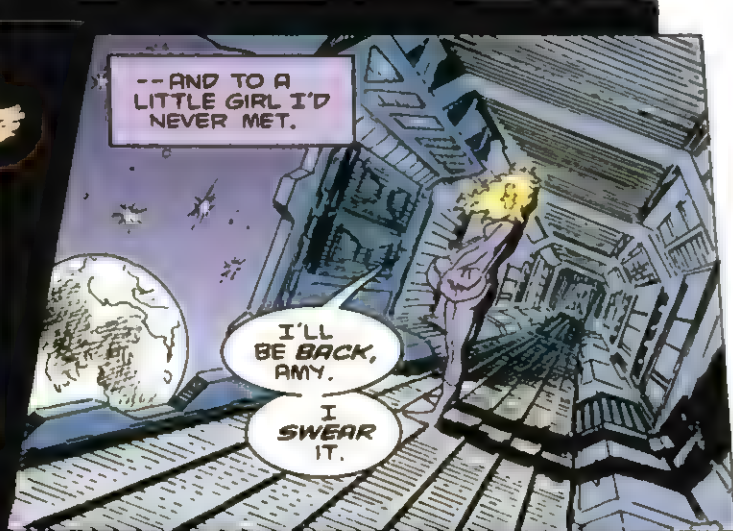
EVER SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I'VE FOUND THAT **PROMISES** ARE LITTLE MORE THAN LIES, MEANT TO BE BROKEN--

YO, BILLIE-- WE'RE **READY**.

GOOD.

BE THERE IN A MINUTE.

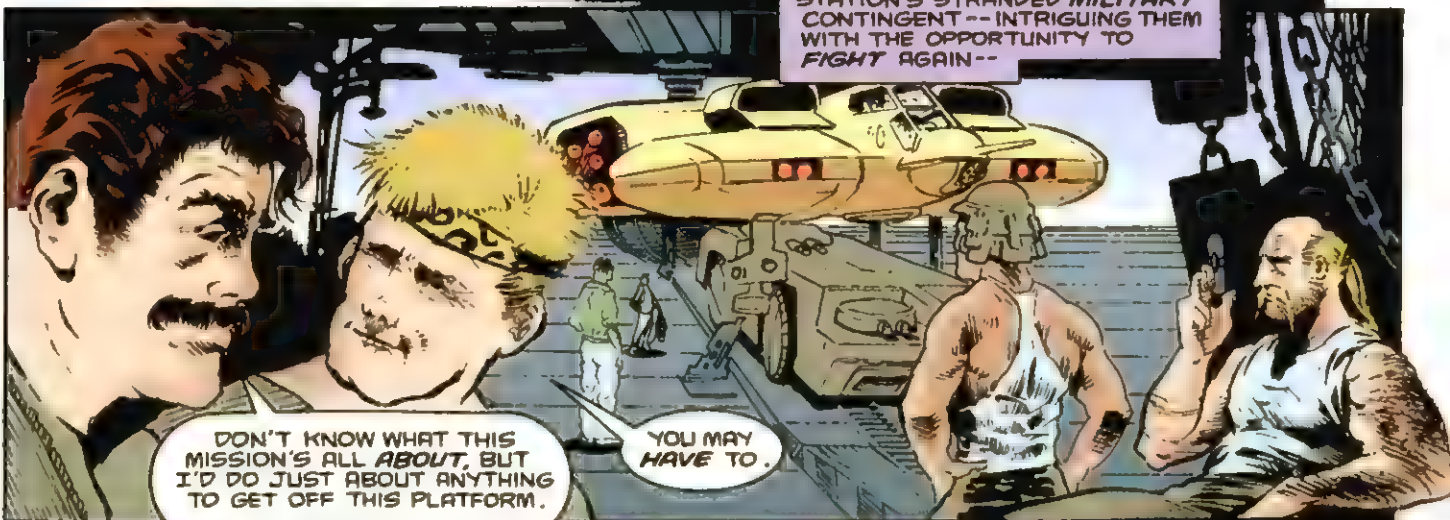
-- BUT AS WE PREPARED FOR LIFTOFF, I MADE A PROMISE TO MYSELF--



-- AND TO A LITTLE GIRL I'D NEVER MET.

I'LL BE BACK, AMY.

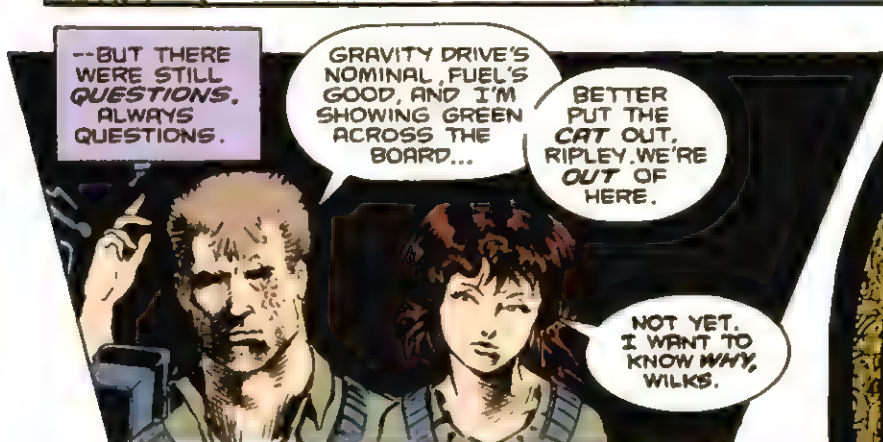
I SWEAR IT.



RIPLY HAD PUT TOGETHER A CREW FROM THE SPACE STATION'S STRANDED MILITARY CONTINGENT -- INTRIGUING THEM WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO FIGHT AGAIN--

DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS MISSION'S ALL ABOUT, BUT I'D DO JUST ABOUT ANYTHING TO GET OFF THIS PLATFORM.

YOU MAY HAVE TO.



--BUT THERE WERE STILL **QUESTIONS**, ALWAYS QUESTIONS.

GRAVITY DRIVE'S NOMINAL, FUEL'S GOOD, AND I'M SHOWING GREEN ACROSS THE BOARD...

BETTER PUT THE CAT OUT, RIPLY. WE'RE OUT OF HERE.

NOT YET. I WANT TO KNOW WHY, WILKS.



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HEAR? THAT YOU WERE RIGHT? THAT THERE'S **MORE** TO THIS THAN THOSE DAMNED THINGS?

IS THAT THE REASON?

I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE IT'S ALL I'VE GOT--



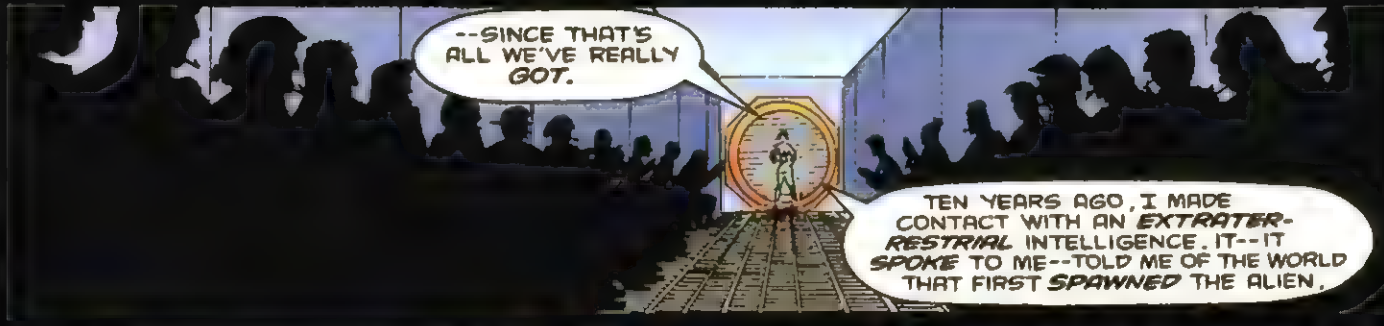
--BESIDES YOUR DREAMS--

"-- AND MY NIGHTMARES."



WE'VE BEEN IN SPACE
THREE DAYS NOW. YOU'VE HAD
A CHANCE TO MEET ONE ANOTHER
AND *SPECULATE* ON THE NATURE
OF OUR MISSION.

I
APPRECIATE
YOUR
FAITH--



--SINCE THAT'S
ALL WE'VE REALLY
GOT.

TEN YEARS AGO, I MADE
CONTACT WITH AN *EXTRATER-*
RESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE. IT--IT
SPOKE TO ME--TOLD ME OF THE WORLD
THAT FIRST *SPAWNED* THE ALIEN.

THE DRONES ARE
ONLY VASSALS, GUIDED
BY A SUPERIOR, *EXTERNAL*
INTELLIGENCE.

MANY OF US
HAVE *FELT* THIS
ALIEN PRESENCE--
THE TORTURED,
EMPATHETIC BOND IT
SHARES WITH ITS
CHILDREN--

--ITS HUNGER
TO BE *WHOLE*
AGAIN.

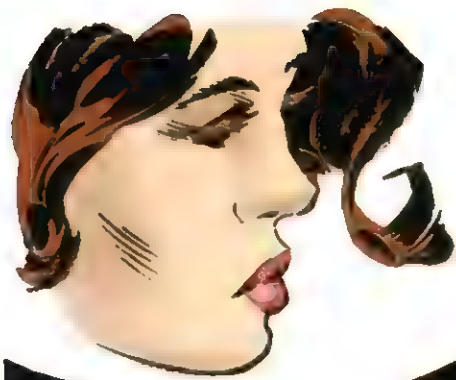
THE CREATURES WERE
NEVER *MEANT* TO BE APART.
TOGETHER, THEY CREATE THE
NEXUS OF ALIEN LIFE. ONE
CANNOT ENDURE WITHOUT
THE OTHER.

BUT THEY *WERE*
SEPARATED, SPREADING
BETWEEN WORLDS LIKE
SEEDS IN THE WIND--

--AND THROUGH
IT ALL, SHE'S BEEN
CALLING TO THEM...
CALLING THEM
BACK.

SO, MOMMA
MISSES HER
KIDS--TOUGH
SHIT.

WHAT THE
HELL ARE WE
GOING TO *DO*
ABOUT IT?



THE BITCH
WANTS HER *BABIES*.
WE CAN'T BRING
THEM TO HER--

--SO WE'LL
BRING *HER*
TO EARTH--

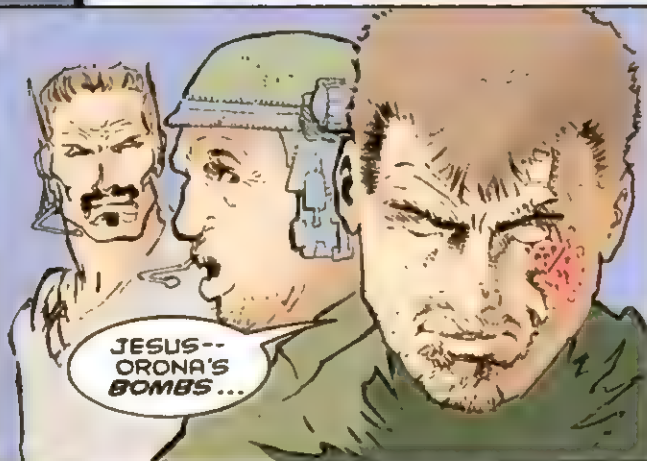
--IN
THIS.



THE SHELLS ARE
IMPERVIOUS TO THE
ALIEN'S *ACID*--BUT MORE
IMPORTANTLY, THEY'LL
SUGGEST *HOME*--
FAMILY--

--HER
LOST
BROOD.

THAT'S WHY YOU
DRAGGED US OUT HERE?
TO PLAY *CHAUFFEUR*--
TO BRING *MORE* OF
THOSE THINGS TO EARTH
FOR A *FAMILY DAMN*
REUNION--? YOU MUST
BE OUT OF YOUR--

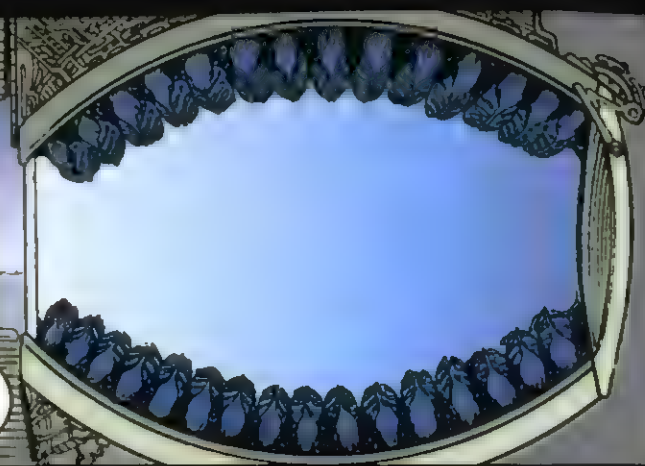


JESUS--
ORONA'S
BOMBS...



BEFORE EARTH WAS LOST,
A GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST
NAMED *ORONA* CONCEIVED A PLAN
TO DETONATE *MULTIPLE NUCLEAR
WARHEADS* IN THE INFESTED
AREAS.

ORONA DIED
BEFORE THE BOMBS
COULD BE TRIG-
GERED.



THIS THING--
THIS "MOTHER
QUEEN"-- WILL *DRAW*
HER CHILDREN TO
HER.

SHE'LL TRY
TO *REPLICATE*
THE WORLD THEY
LEFT BEHIND--

--AND WHEN
THEY'VE JOINED
IN THEIR GRAND
UNION--

--WE'LL
DESTROY THEM.
WE'LL DESTROY
THEM *ALL*.





GATEWAY
PLATFORM, TWO
DAYS LATER.



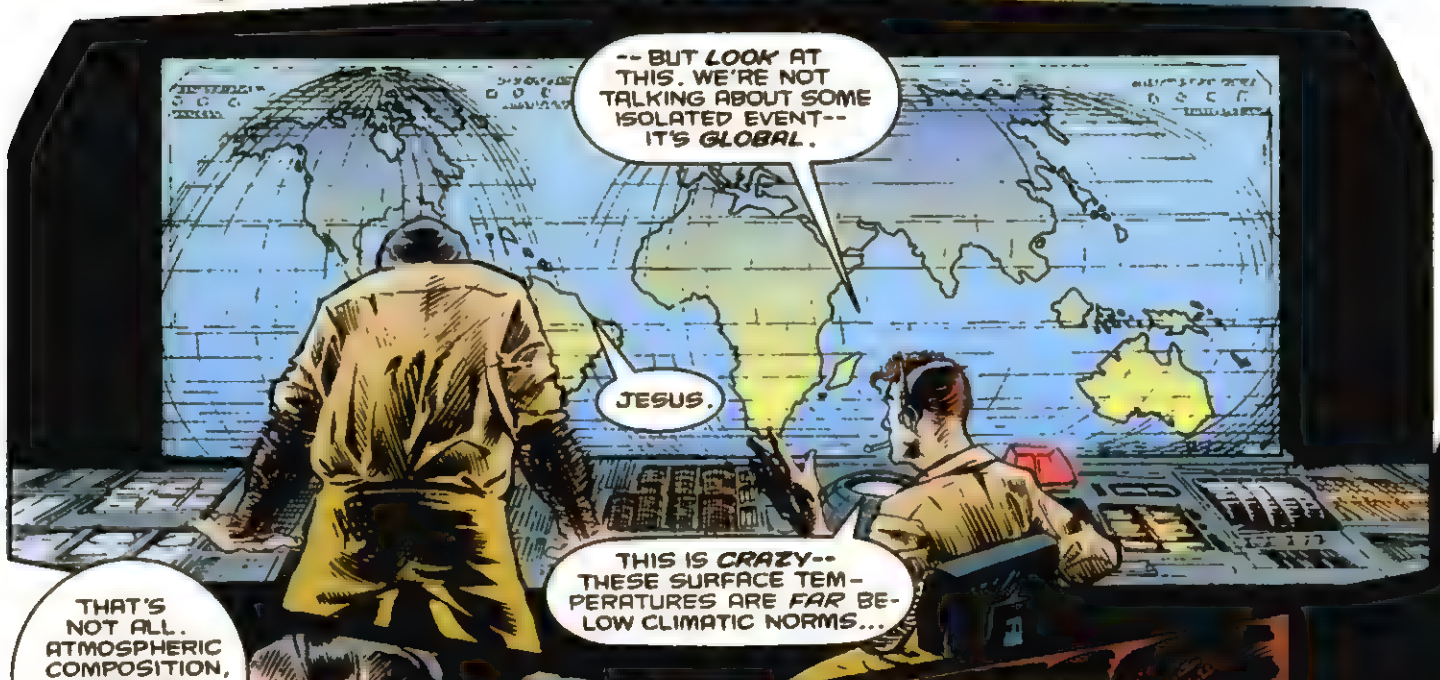
UHH, CAPTAIN
MCQUADE, THIS IS
DONNELL, DECK
THREE. YOU'D BETTER
HAVE A LOOK AT
THIS.



WHAT HAVE
YOU GOT,
DONNELL?

I--
I'M NOT
SURE,
CAPTAIN.

AT FIRST I
BLAMED THE READINGS
ON FAULTY MONITORING
EQUIPMENT--



-- BUT LOOK AT
THIS. WE'RE NOT
TALKING ABOUT SOME
ISOLATED EVENT--
IT'S GLOBAL.

JESUS.

THIS IS CRAZY--
THESE SURFACE TEM-
PERATURES ARE FAR BE-
LOW CLIMATIC NORMS...

THAT'S
NOT ALL.
ATMOSPHERIC
COMPOSITION,
MOISTURE
PATTERNS,
WIND FLUCTU-
ATIONS--

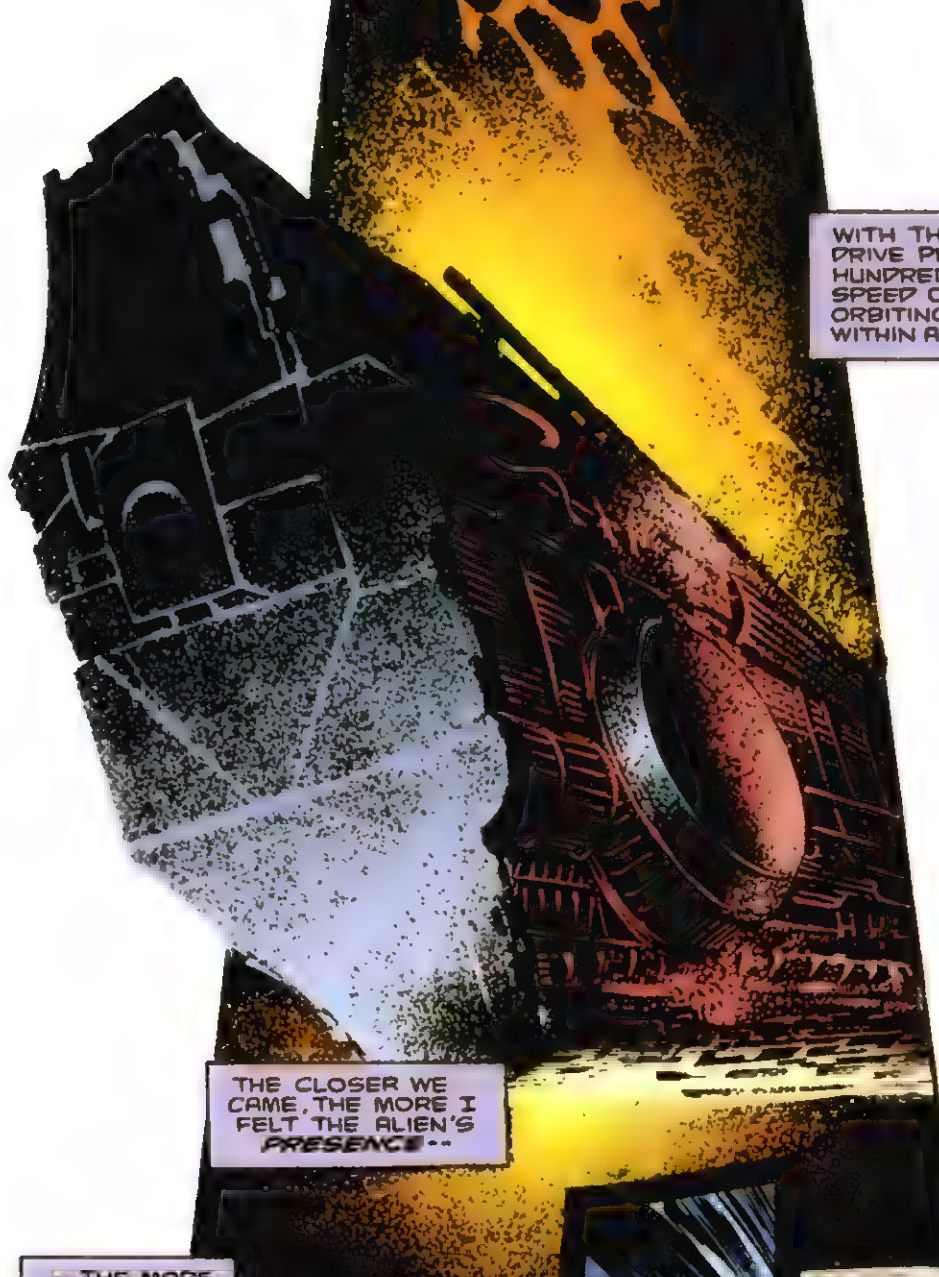


--THEY'RE MIMICKING
THE SORTS OF READINGS
YOU'D SEE IN THE EMBRYONIC
STAGES OF A TERRA-
FORMING PROJECT.

CRAZY THING
IS, I'VE LOCALIZED
THE ENERGY
SOURCE--

--SIR, IT'S
PLASMA-BASED--
AND IT'S COMING
FROM SPACE!





WITH THE SHIP'S GRAVITY
DRIVE PROPELLING US AT
HUNDREDS OF TIMES THE
SPEED OF LIGHT, WE WERE
ORBITING RIPLEY'S "DREAM"
WITHIN A MATTER OF DAYS.

THE CLOSER WE
CAME, THE MORE I
FELT THE ALIEN'S
PRESENCE--

--THE MORE
I KNEW IT
FELT *MINE*.

BILLIE--
WE'RE ALMOST
READY.

ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?

TULLY--?
GOD, I DON'T
KNOW...

...I--I'VE
BEEN THINKING
ABOUT *EARTH*.

I NEVER REALLY
CONSIDERED IT MY
HOME. I FEEL I'VE
BEEN ADRIFT ALL THESE
YEARS, *SEARCHING*...

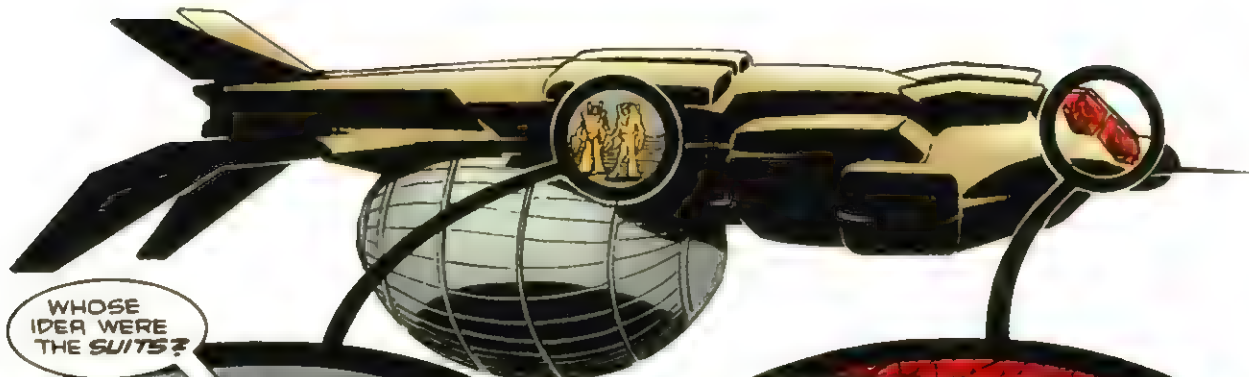
IT'S THE
SAME FOR ALL
OF US: ME, RIPLEY,
WILKS--

--THE
ALIEN.

IT'S FUNNY.
WE SEE THEM
AS *INTRUDERS*
ON EARTH, TAKING
SOMETHING PRE-
CIOUS *AWAY*
FROM US, BUT--

--MAYBE
WE'RE THE
INTRUDERS,
TULLY.

MAYBE THEIR
SEARCH IS OVER--
AND EARTH WAS
MEANT TO BE THEIRS
ALL ALONG.



WHOSE
IDEA WERE
THE SUITS?

RIPLEY'S. SHE
CONVINCED CAPTAIN
MCQUADE TO CANNIBAL-
IZE THE PLATFORM'S
POWER LOADERS AND
MODIFY THEM FOR
MILITARY DUTY.

SAYS
SHE'S HAD
EXPERIENCE
WITH THIS SORT
OF THING.

I GUESS
SHE LIKES
HAVING AN
EDGE.

GOOD.

FUEL NOMINAL,
ELECTRICALS UP--
MAKE SURE WE HAVE
HARD COPY OFF THE
DROP SHIP'S NAVA-
TIONAL, JUST IN
CASE.

CHRIST, BREW,
HAVE YOU CHECKED
OUT THE MATRIX
ON THE DROP
SITE?

I'M PICKING
UP ROCK FORMA-
TIONS THAT MAKE
MT. EVEREST LOOK
LIKE A BAD
PIVOT.

HEY,
IF IT WAS
EASY,
ANYBODY
COULD DO
IT.

BESIDES,
TOPOGRAPHY'S
THE A.P.C.'S PROB-
LEM. ALL WE
HAVE TO DO IS
DROP THEM.

YEAH.

AND PICK
UP WHATEVER
THE HELL THEY
FIND DOWN
THERE.



I...

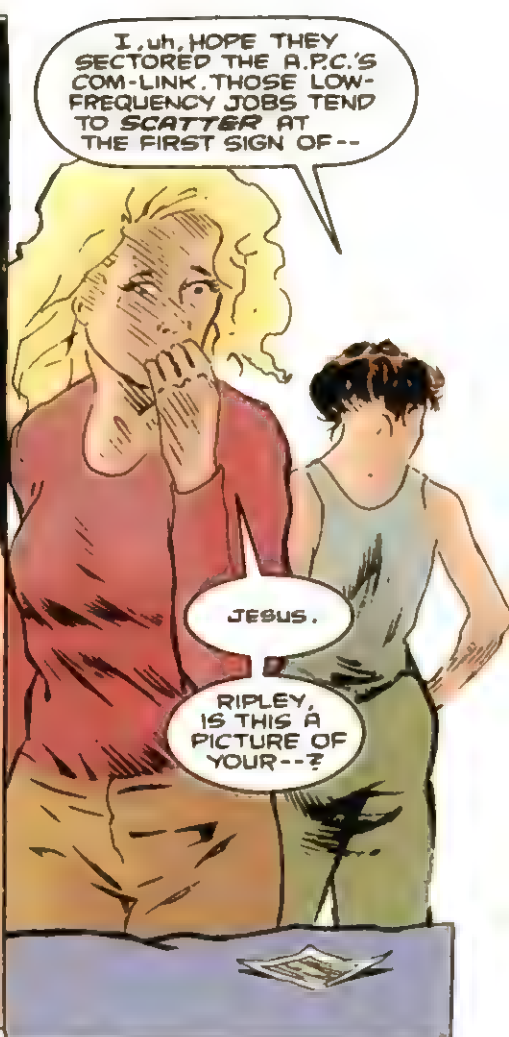
I'M
SORRY,
HONEY.



RIPLEY--
THEY'RE
READY.

YEAH.

FINE.
BE THERE IN
A MINUTE.



I, uh, HOPE THEY
SECTORED THE A.P.C.'S
COM-LINK. THOSE LOW-
FREQUENCY JOBS TEND
TO SCATTER AT
THE FIRST SIGN OF--

JESUS.

RIPLEY,
IS THIS A
PICTURE OF
YOUR--?



MY DAUGHTER.
IT WAS TAKEN A
COUPLE OF WEEKS
BEFORE I REPORTED
ABOARD THE
NOSTROMO.

SHE--
SHE WAS
BEAUTIFUL.

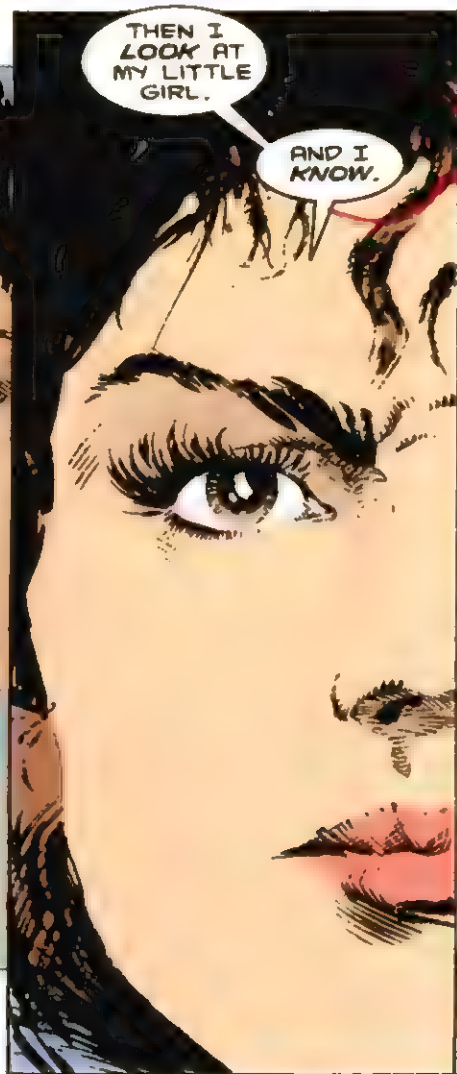
YEAH, THE PSYCHS WERE
CONCERNED WHEN I DIDN'T
SHOW AN "OVERT EMOTIONAL
RESPONSE" TO HER DEATH--
BUT WHY SHOULD I? THE OLD
WOMAN IN THEIR FILES WAS
A **STRANGER** TO ME.



I SPENT HER WHOLE
LIFE DRIFTING THROUGH
EMPTY SPACE--**LOST** IN
YEARS OF PERFECT HIBER-
NATION, WHILE SHE GREW
OLD AND **DIED**.

THE ALIEN
STOLE
THE TIME WE
SHOULD HAVE
HAD TOGETHER.

SOMETIMES I THINK
THOSE **THINGS** HAVE AS
MUCH RIGHT TO SURVIVE
AS **ANY** OF US. SOME-
TIMES I WONDER WHAT
GIVES US THE **ARRO-
GANCE** TO CHALLENGE
THEIR EXISTENCE.



THEN I
LOOK AT
MY LITTLE
GIRL.

AND I
KNOW.



GLAD YOU
COULD STOP
BY, RIPLEY--
ESPECIALLY
SINCE THIS IS
YOUR PARTY.

BREWSTER'S
PICKED UP A CLUSTER
OF MOVEMENT IN THE
SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE.
VERY ERRATIC-- MIGHT
EVEN BE SEISMIC.

PROPER PROCEDURE
WOULD BE TO DROP A
ROBOT *PROBE*--BUT I
DON'T SEE ANY POINT
BOTHERING WITH COUNT-
DOWNS AND TRIPLE-
REDUNDANT
CROSS-CHECKS.

CLICK

WE'RE
EITHER
READY--
OR WE
DIE...

"...LET'S NOT
KEEP THEM
WAITING."

MY ENTIRE LIFE HAD BEEN IN *PREPARATION* FOR THIS MOMENT, AND YET I WAS SUDDENLY FILLED WITH AN AWFUL SENSE OF *DREAD*.

IT WAS *WRONG*. IT WAS ALL *WRONG*.

IT WASN'T THE THOUGHT OF *DEATH* THAT FRIGHTENED ME--

--IT WAS OUR *REASON*, OUR *PURPOSE*.

DUTY. HONOR. A LITTLE GIRL NAMED AMY. WE WANTED TO BELIEVE IN OUR GALLANT *JUSTIFICATIONS*, BUT THE TRUTH IS NEVER SO SIMPLE.

RIPLY'S DREAMS, MY NIGHTMARES-- WERE THEY *REALLY* THE REASONS THAT HAD BROUGHT US HERE?

SURFACE WINDS ARE PUSHING 130 *KNOTS*.

BETTER *BUTTON UP*, BOYS.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT, WILKS-- I CAN'T MANEUVER FOR LONG IN THIS DAMNED WIND.

I'VE SCOPED A RELATIVELY LEVEL HORIZONTAL, ABOUT THREE HUNDRED METERS FROM THE MAIN CLUSTER.

TAKE IT.

I'M GOING BACK WITH THE GRUNTS. SHE'S ALL YOURS.

OR WERE THEY HER *LURES*--?

MAYBE WE HADN'T
COME TO THE ALIEN'S
WORLD OF OUR OWN
ACCORD...

MAYBE
WE'D BEEN
SENT.

LEVEL, MY ASS!
I'D LIKE TO SEE
BREWSTER'S IDEA
OF ROUGH
TERRAIN.

DROP SHIP'S
AWAY, RIPLEY...
MOTION SEN-
SORS PUT THE
CLUSTER AT
100 METERS
AND CLOSING.

I
HEAR
YOU.

E.T.A.
THREE
MINUTES.

WE'LL
BE
REA--

WE... WE LOST
ONE OF THE AFT
STRUTS, BUT OTHER-
WISE DAMAGE SEEMS
MINOR...

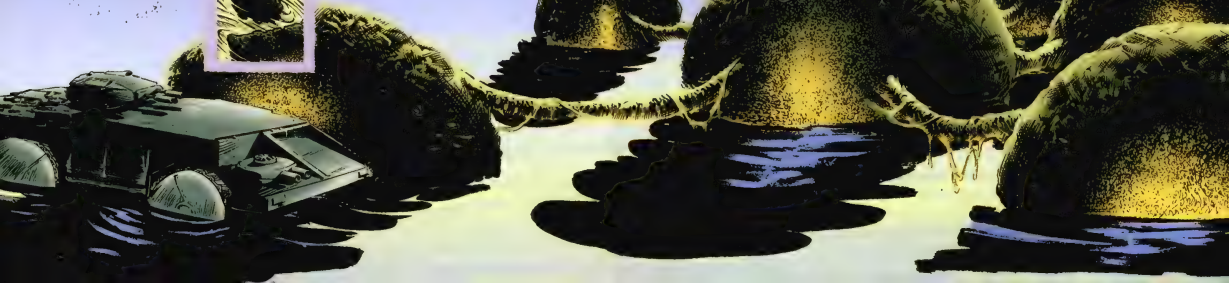
--WHAT THE
HELL DID WE
HIT?

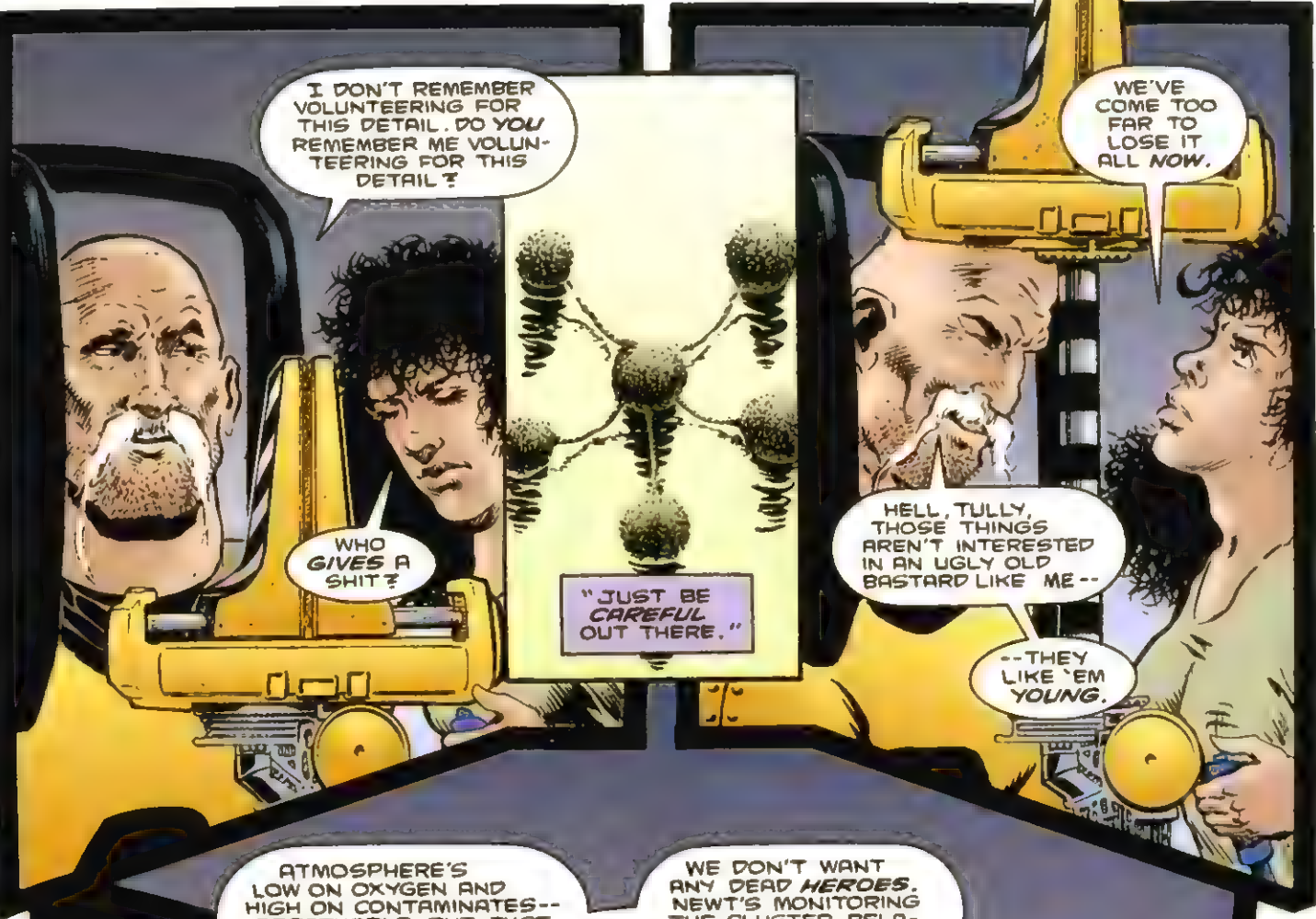
I-- I'M NOT SURE.
SOME KIND OF MOIS-
TURE TREADS LIFTED
AND WE LOST
TRACTION.

WHAT
IS THAT
STUFF?

OH,
MY
GOD--

--IT'S
REAL





I DON'T REMEMBER VOLUNTEERING FOR THIS DETAIL. DO YOU REMEMBER ME VOLUNTEERING FOR THIS DETAIL?

WHO GIVES A SHIT?

"JUST BE CAREFUL OUT THERE."

WE'VE COME TOO FAR TO LOSE IT ALL NOW.

HELL, TULLY, THOSE THINGS AREN'T INTERESTED IN AN UGLY OLD BASTARD LIKE ME--

--THEY LIKE 'EM YOUNG.

ATMOSPHERE'S LOW ON OXYGEN AND HIGH ON CONTAMINATES-- BREATHABLE, BUT JUST BARELY. USE THE ONBOARD MASKS WHEN YOU CAN.

WE DON'T WANT ANY DEAD **HEROES**. NEWT'S MONITORING THE CLUSTER RELATIVE TO YOUR POSITION, SO **LISTEN UP--**

--AND STAY AWAKE!

HEART RATE AND BLOOD PRESSURE READINGS LOOK LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A HYPERTENSIVE'S HOW-TO MANUAL...

...THEY MAY DO A LOT OF THINGS, BUT **SLEEPING** WON'T BE ONE OF THEM.



THIS... *JELLY*...
ISN'T RELATED TO ANY
SURFACE ANOMALY. IT
SEEMS TO BE *EMANATING*
FROM THE FORMATION'S
CORE.

WHAT ARE
THESE THINGS?
THEY'RE TOO
LARGE TO BE
ALIEN EGG
SACS.

WHATEVER THE
HELL, IT'S *DEFINITELY*
ORGANIC-- AND IT'S
OOZING THAT TRANS-
LUCENT *DISCHARGE* LIKE
A SON OF A BITCH!

I CAN--
I CAN
ALMOST SEE
INSIDE...

OH GOD--
I'M PICKING
UP *MOVEMENT*
FROM THE FIVE
EXTERNAL
CLUSTERS.

WILKS--
IT'S COMING
FROM THOSE
PODS!

FALK!
GET OUT
OF THERE--
NOW!

...THERE'S
SOMETHING
INSIDE--

WHA--?



AGHHHH--!

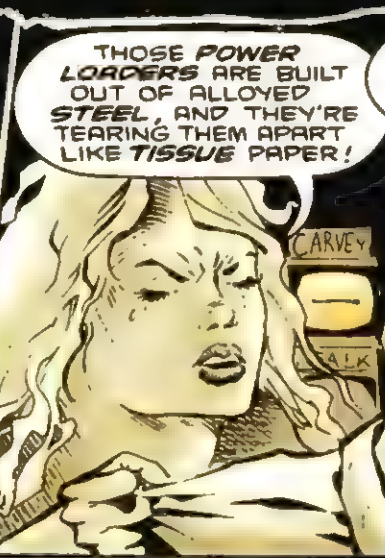


FALK!
JESUS,
SOMEONE
HELP
ME--!

GET
IT OFF
ME--
GET IT--
AHH--
AHGGG
--!



CARVEY!



THOSE **POWER
LOADERS** ARE BUILT
OUT OF ALLOYED
STEEL, AND THEY'RE
TEARING THEM APART
LIKE **TISSUE PAPER**!



THE
GODDAMN
THINGS
MUST HAVE
EVOLVED--



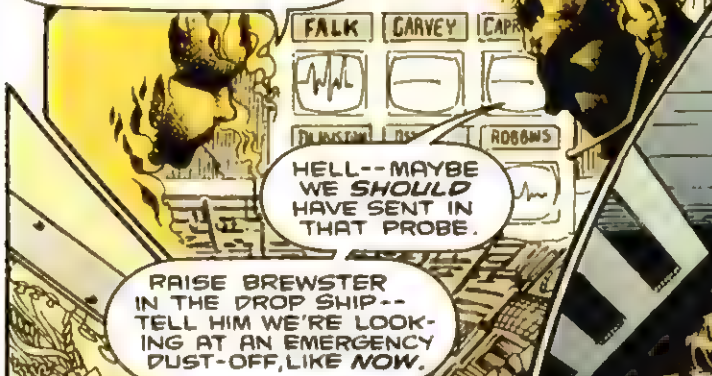
--THE
QUESTION
IS, **HOW
MUCH?**

AAA
AAA
AAA





I'M GETTING
MOTION SENSOR READ-
INGS FROM ALL THE
EXTERNAL PODS--MUST
BE MORE OF THE **THINGS**
THAT ATTACKED CARVEY.



HELL--MAYBE
WE **SHOULD**
HAVE SENT IN
THAT PROBE.

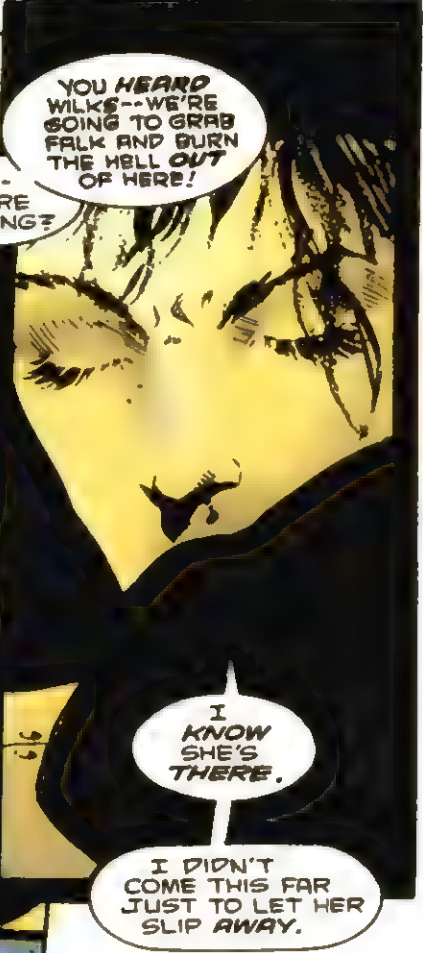
RAISE BREWSTER
IN THE DROP SHIP--
TELL HIM WE'RE LOOK-
ING AT AN EMERGENCY
DUST-OFF, LIKE NOW.



READ YOU,
A.P.C., BUT
NO WAY CAN
WE PUT DOWN
AT YOUR CUR-
RENT POSITION.

ROLL
BACK TO
THE INITIAL
DROP POINT AND
WE'LL PICK YOU
UP GENTLE AS
A KITTEN.

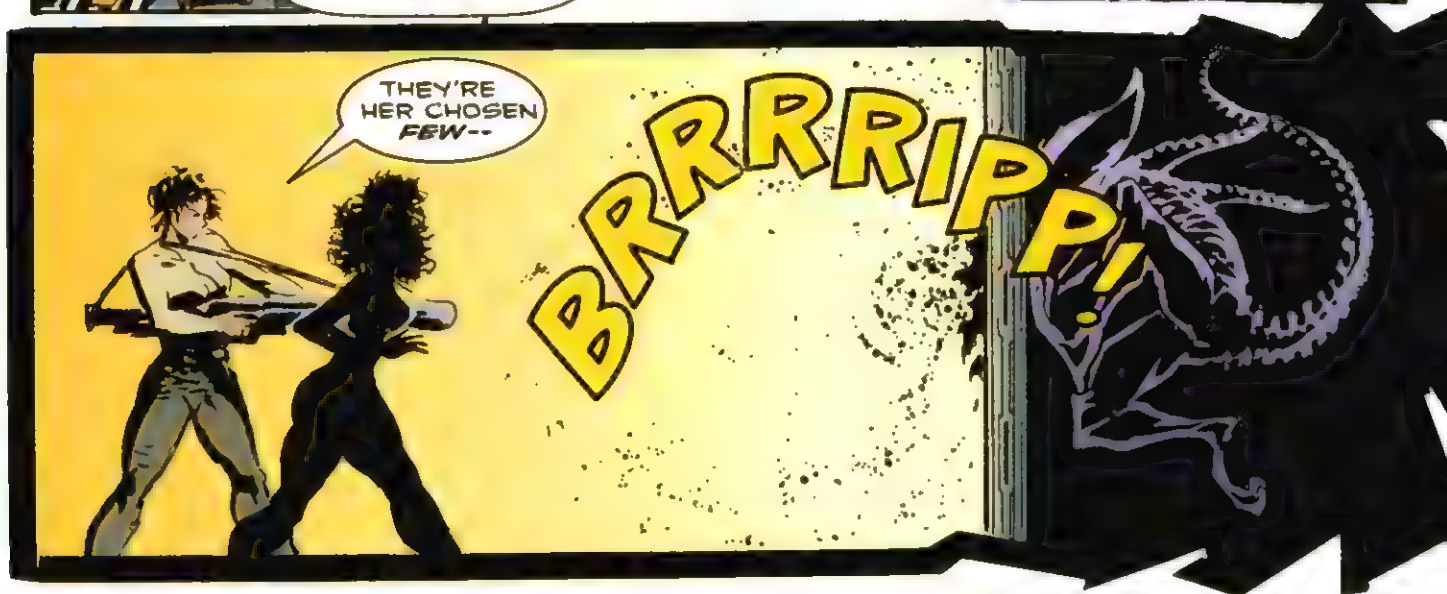
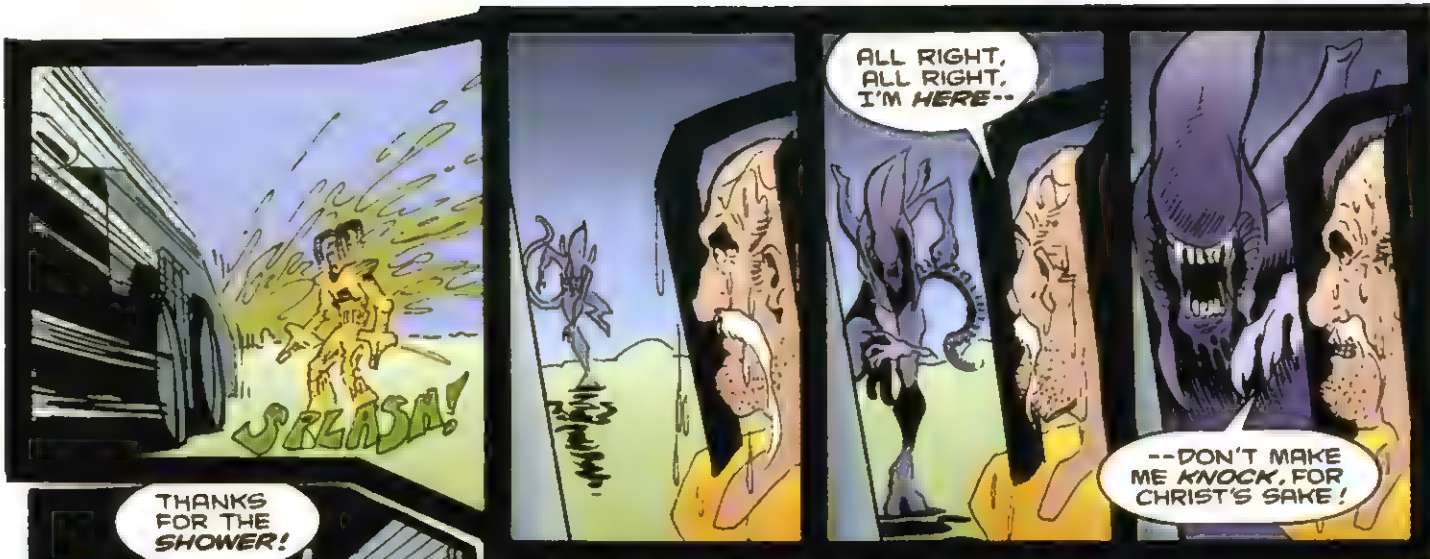
RIPLEY--
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING?



YOU HEARD
WILKS--WE'RE
GOING TO GRAB
FALK AND BURN
THE HELL OUT
OF HERE!

I
KNOW
SHE'S
THERE.

I DIDN'T
COME THIS FAR
JUST TO LET HER
SLIP AWAY.



"-- THEY'RE TRYING TO PROTECT HER."

WHUMP

WHAT TH--?

SOMETHING'S OPENED OUR REACTOR'S INTERNAL COOLING SYSTEM-- CORE TEMPERATURE'S RISING BY THE SECOND!

YEAH. AND MANUAL CONTROL'S FOR SHIT--

--LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT VISITORS ON THE HULL.

RIPLEY-- WE'RE NEVER GOING TO MAKE IT TO THE DROP SITE.

--AND WE'LL FINISH IT, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

YOU-- YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL --HOW MUCH YOU AND BILLIE MEAN TO ME...

RIGHT. JUST PULL OVER AND "DROP YOU OFF."

THOSE BASTARDS WILL BE ALL OVER US IN A SECOND--!

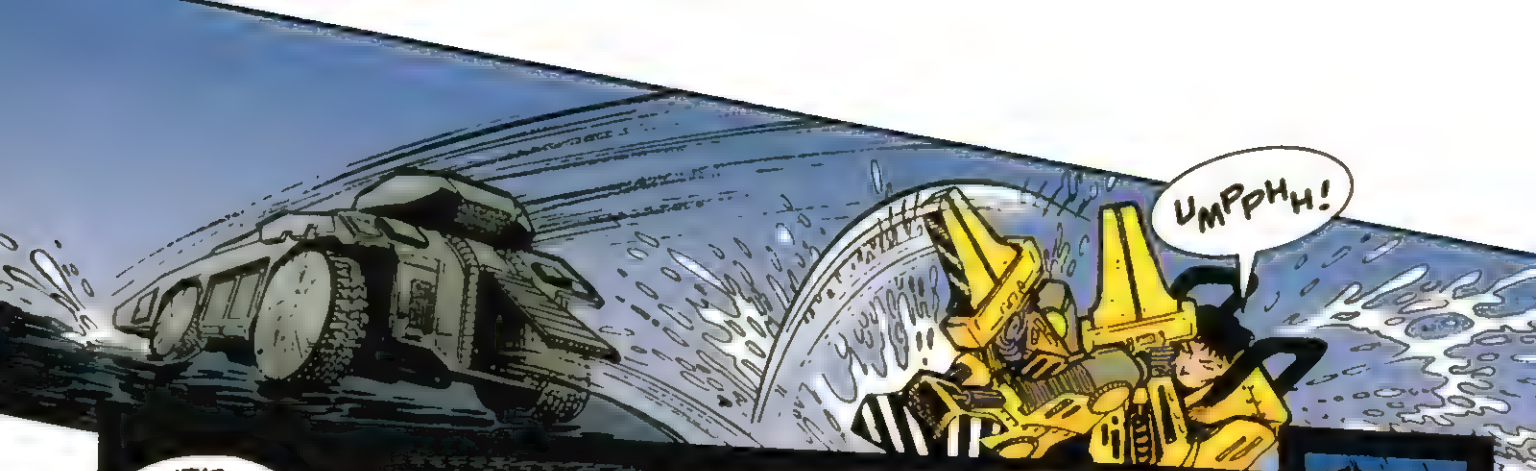
THIS IS YOUR SHOW--ANY IDEAS?

YEAH. GIVE ME FIVE MINUTES OF COVER TO GET INTO THE THING'S NEST--

HEY, SCREW IT, RIPLEY--

SO WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT STOPPING? AS SOON AS I'M OUT, SEAL THE HATCH.

--SAVE IT FOR WHEN YOU GET BACK.



UMPPH!

IT'S
JUST YOU
AND ME
NOW--

"I'M SHOWING
SEVERAL LIFE
FORMS MOVING AT-
HIGH SPEED
TOWARD THE A.P.C.--"

--I GUESS
THAT MEANS
RIPLEY'S PLAN
IS WORKING.

REACTOR
HALFWAY TO CRIT-
ICAL, A.P.C. SWARM-
ING WITH THOSE
GODDAMN THINGS...

--THE
WAY IT'S
ALWAYS
BEEN.

...IF HER PLAN WAS
WORKING ANY BETTER,
WE COULD BLOW OUR
BRAINS OUT NOW AND
SAVE THOSE BASTARDS
THE TROU--

JESUS--!



KKSSSSHHH!

PLOOM!

'COURSE,
IT COULD BE
WORSE ...

"...WE COULD BE
OUT THERE--
WITH RIPLEY."

I WONDER
HOW LONG
THEY'VE BEEN
WAITING...

...HOW LONG
THEY'VE **ACHED**
FOR RELEASE...

GOD--I
CAN FEEL YOU
ALL **AROUND**
ME...

WHACK!

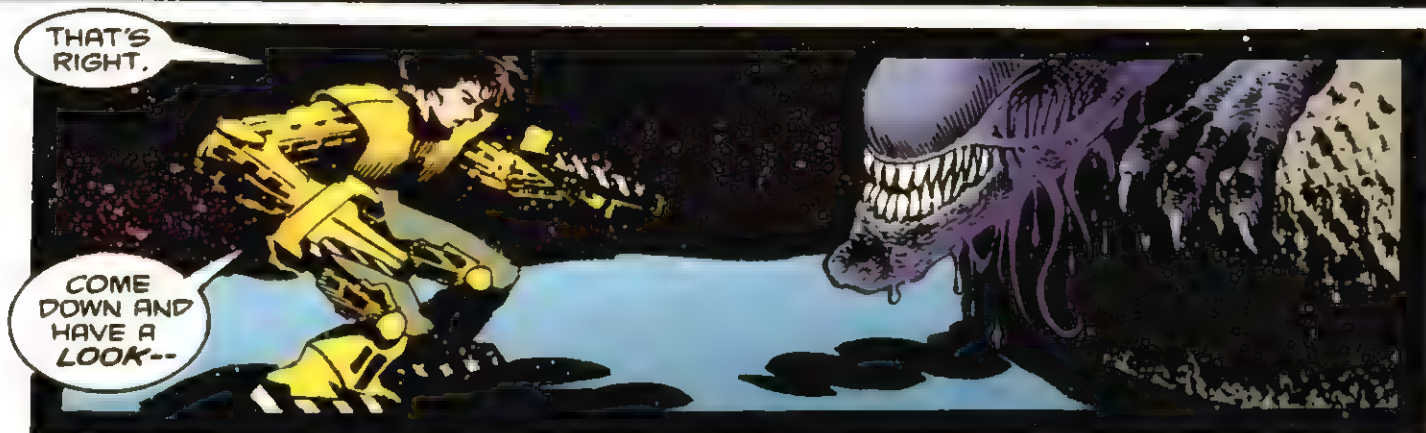
...WHY
DON'T YOU
**SHOW YOUR-
SELF--?**

EXPLAIN YOUR
WORTHLESS
EXISTENCE--
WHAT YOU DID TO
THE **CREW** OF THE
NOSTROMO, THE
SOLDIERS FROM
THE SULACO...

CHAK!

...EXPLAIN
EARTH...

...EXPLAIN
NEWT...





--YOU
BITCH!

WHACK

DROP
SHIP, THIS
IS RIPLEY.

ZERO MY
POSITION AND
PREPARE TO
EFFECT PICK-
UP.

I TOLD
WILKS AND
I'LL TELL
YOU--THERE'S
NO PLACE TO
LAND--!

WE
CAN'T
EFFECT
SHIT--

SO DON'T
PUT DOWN--BUT
GET THAT SHIP
OVER MY COORDI-
NATES, NOW!

CORE TEMPERATURE'S GOING CRAZY--WE'RE GOING TO TOTAL **MELT-DOWN** IN A MATTER OF **MINUTES!**



WE'RE TALKING MORE THAN **MELT-DOWN**. WHEN THAT CORE HITS THE LIQUID FUEL CHAMBER, WE'RE LOOKING AT AN **EXPLOSION**.



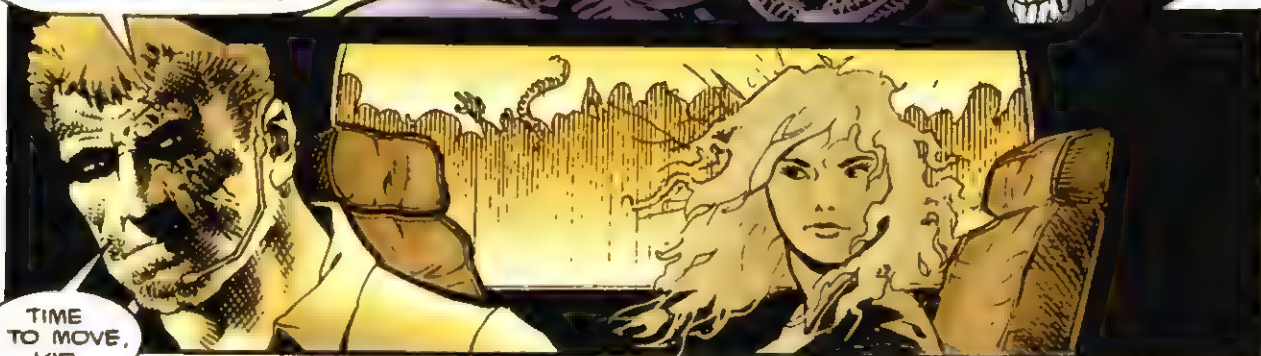
OH, GOD--I-- I'M PICKING UP NEW **MOTION** READINGS FROM THE OUTER PERIMETER ...

...SHE'S-- SHE'S CALLING HER CHILDREN...

...THERE MUST BE THOUSANDS OF THEM!



I SHOW SEVEN MINUTES UNTIL MELT-DOWN. STEERING'S LOCKED, WHICH MEANS THIS THING WILL KEEP ROLLING UNTIL SOMETHING BLOWS.



TIME TO MOVE, KID.

TAKE ALL THE AMMUNITION YOU CAN CARRY--WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE THE DROP SITE ON **FOOT**.

KA-CHUNK!

TAKIN' A LITTLE HIKE, HUH--?



I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE PUT ON THAT SECOND PAIR OF SOCKS.



SPLASH!

EVERYBODY
STAY
TOGETHER!

CONSERVE
YOUR AMMUNI-
TION-- FIRE
AT SPECIFIC
TARGETS.

SON
OF
A--!

BRRRIIPP!

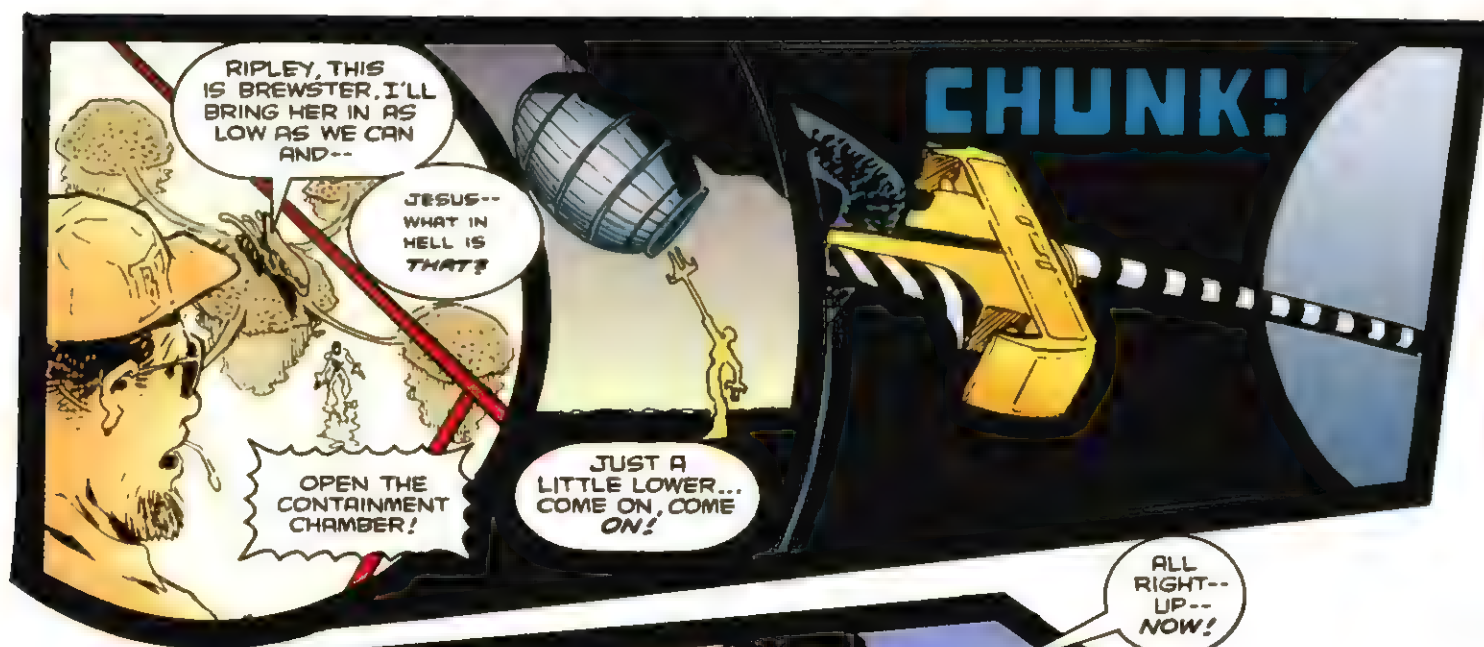
YOU
MEAN LIKE
THIS--?

IT'S OVER,
WILKS-- YOU
KNOW THAT
WE'LL NEVER
MAKE THE
DROP SITE!

FIVE MORE
MINUTES AND
THE A.P.C. WILL
DETONATE.
THEN--GUESS
WHAT...

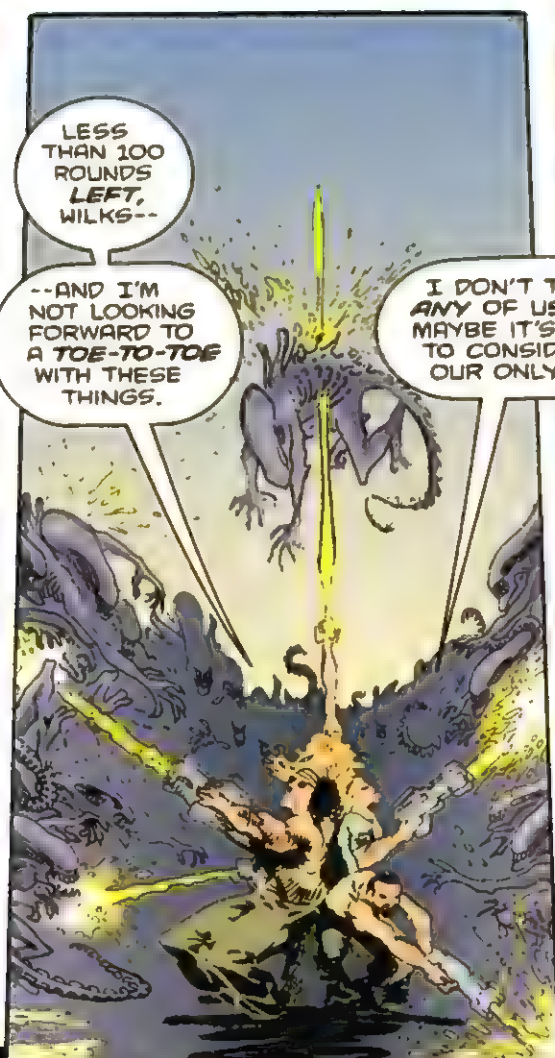
THEY'RE
ALL
AROUND
US...

...NEITHER
WILL
THEY!









LESS
THAN 100
ROUNDS
LEFT,
WILKS--

--AND I'M
NOT LOOKING
FORWARD TO
A TOE-TO-TOE
WITH THESE
THINGS.

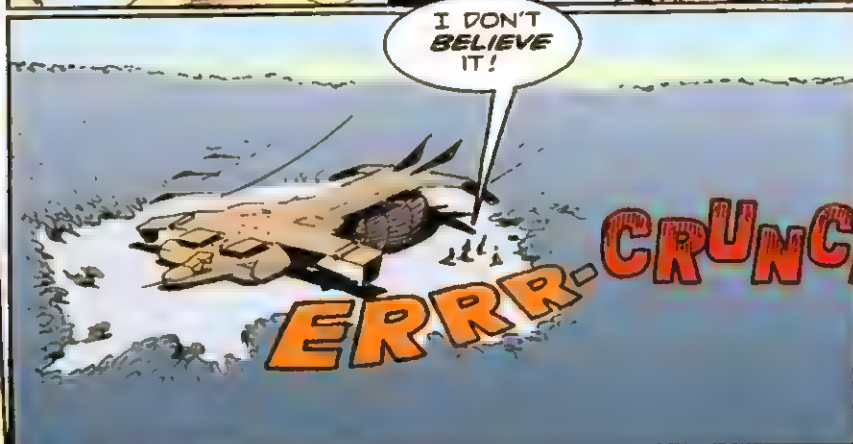
I DON'T THINK
ANY OF US ARE.
MAYBE IT'S TIME
TO CONSIDER
OUR ONLY...



...OPTION...

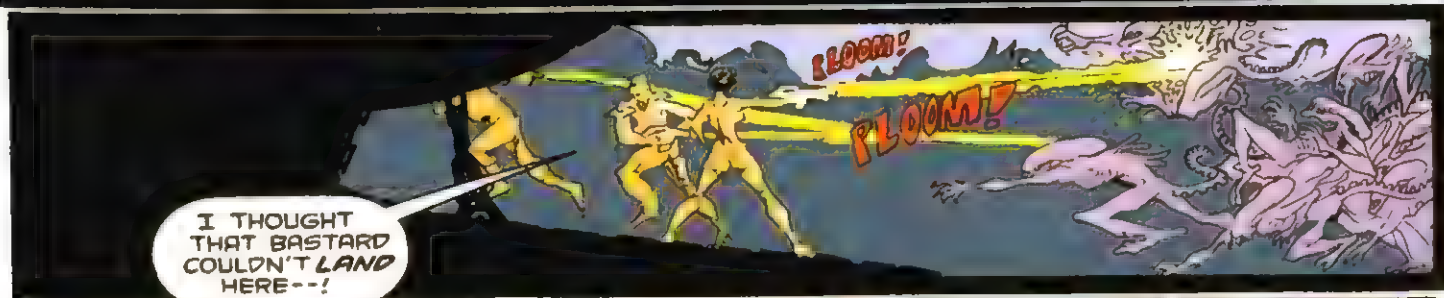


I DON'T
BELIEVE
IT!

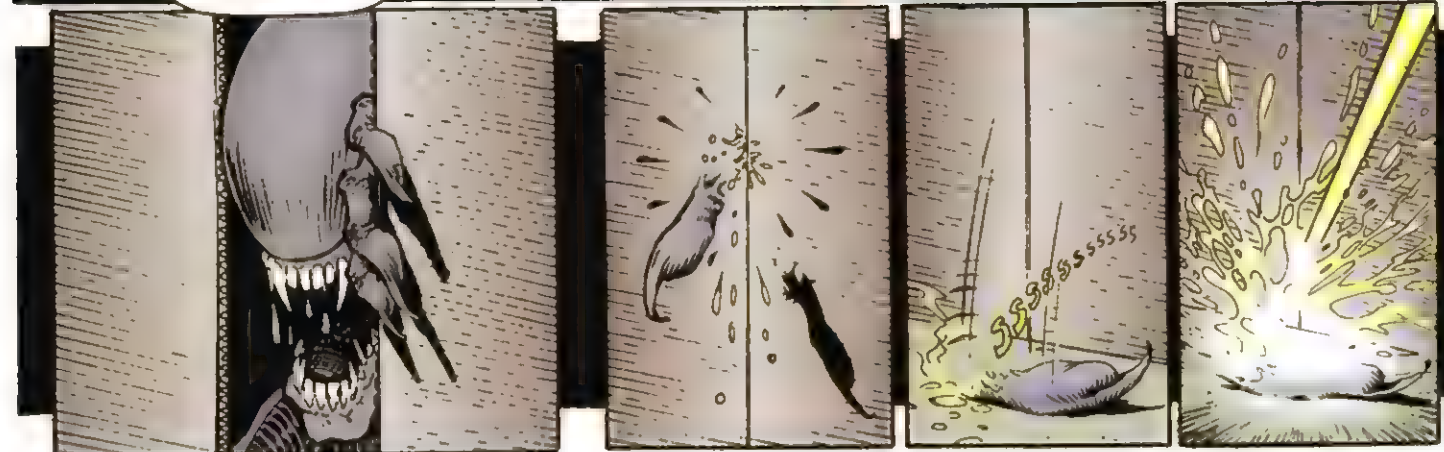


THIRTY
SECONDS
TO MELT-
DOWN.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU WAITING FOR?



I THOUGHT
THAT BASTARD
COULDN'T LAND
HERE--!



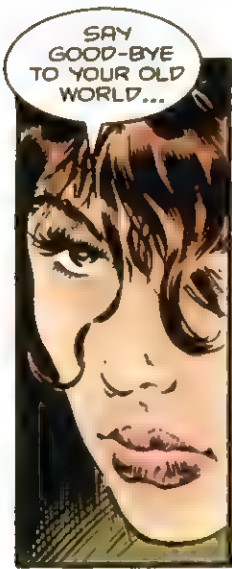


I
CONVINCED
HIM TO RE-
CONSIDER.



DETONATION
IN FIVE SEC-
ONDS. BRACE
YOURSELVES.

765492
TAK TAK T TAK TAK



SAY
GOOD-BYE
TO YOUR OLD
WORLD...

"...YOU'RE WITH
ME NOW."



IT'S COLD.

SO COLD.

--THE EARTH WE KNEW IS GONE. THE ALIENS HAVE TAKEN IT AS THEIR OWN.

WE'VE BEEN ON THE RUN FOR WEEKS--

POWER TO THE SATELLITE UPLINKS WENT OUT WHEN THE CREATURES FINALLY SEVERED THE MAIN UNDERGROUNDS. THERE WOULD BE NO MORE TRANSMISSIONS."

I--I USED TO COME HERE WHEN I WAS A KID.

THERE WERE MORE SOPHISTICATED ATTRACTIONS DOWN BY THE SHORE-- THREE-DIMENSIONAL STUFF, INFRA-LIGHT, GRAVITY CHAMBERS-- BUT I WAS PREOCCUPIED WITH THE MACHINES.

FOR SOME REASON WE DON'T FEEL THE CREATURES LIKE THE OTHERS. WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO RESIST HER MENTAL LURE...

I DIDN'T KNOW WHY BACK THEN, BUT NOW I THINK I UNDERSTAND. THEY NEVER KNEW PAIN, THE FEAR OF DEATH--

--AND IF YOU NEVER LIVE, YOU CAN NEVER DIE. THERE'S A KIND OF IMMORTALITY IN THAT.

THAT'S ENOUGH, PAUL.

YOU-- YOU USED TO PLAY HERE?

...WHILE SHE USES THE OTHERS TO BREED HER CHILDREN.

AMY'S ALL I HAVE LEFT.

SHOW ME. SHOW ME WHAT IT WAS LIKE.

I WANT HER TO KNOW SOMETHING GOOD. SOMETHING DECENT, BEFORE SHE DIES.

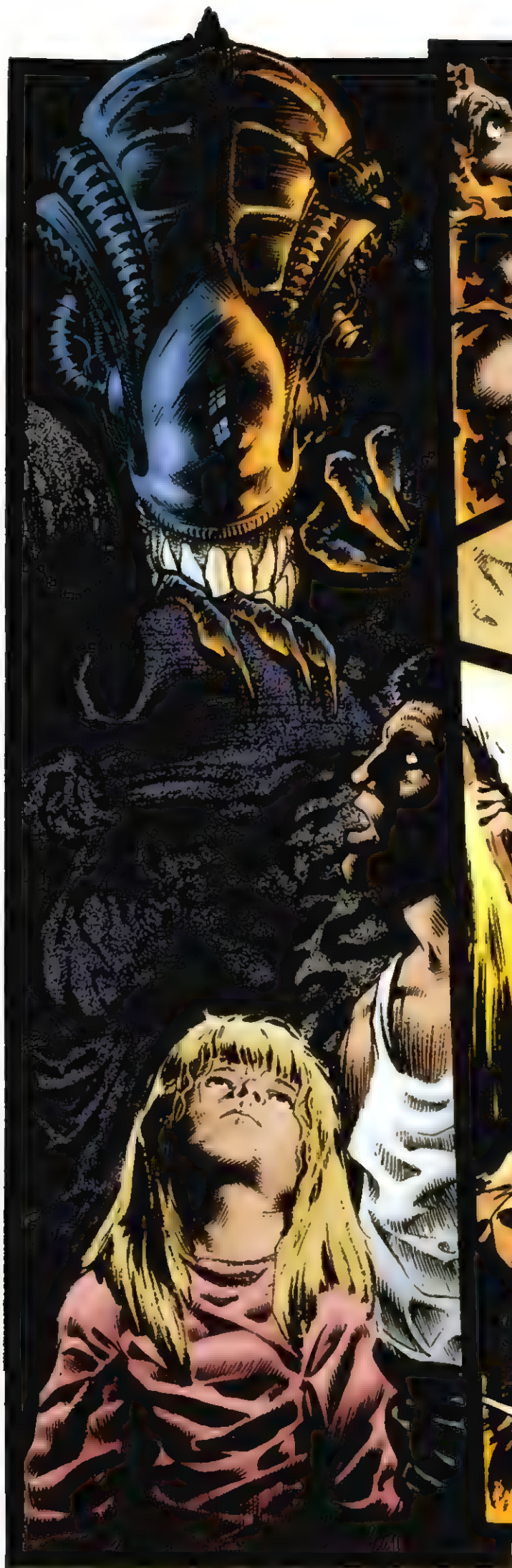
BEFORE WE ALL DIE.

PRETEND FOR ME.

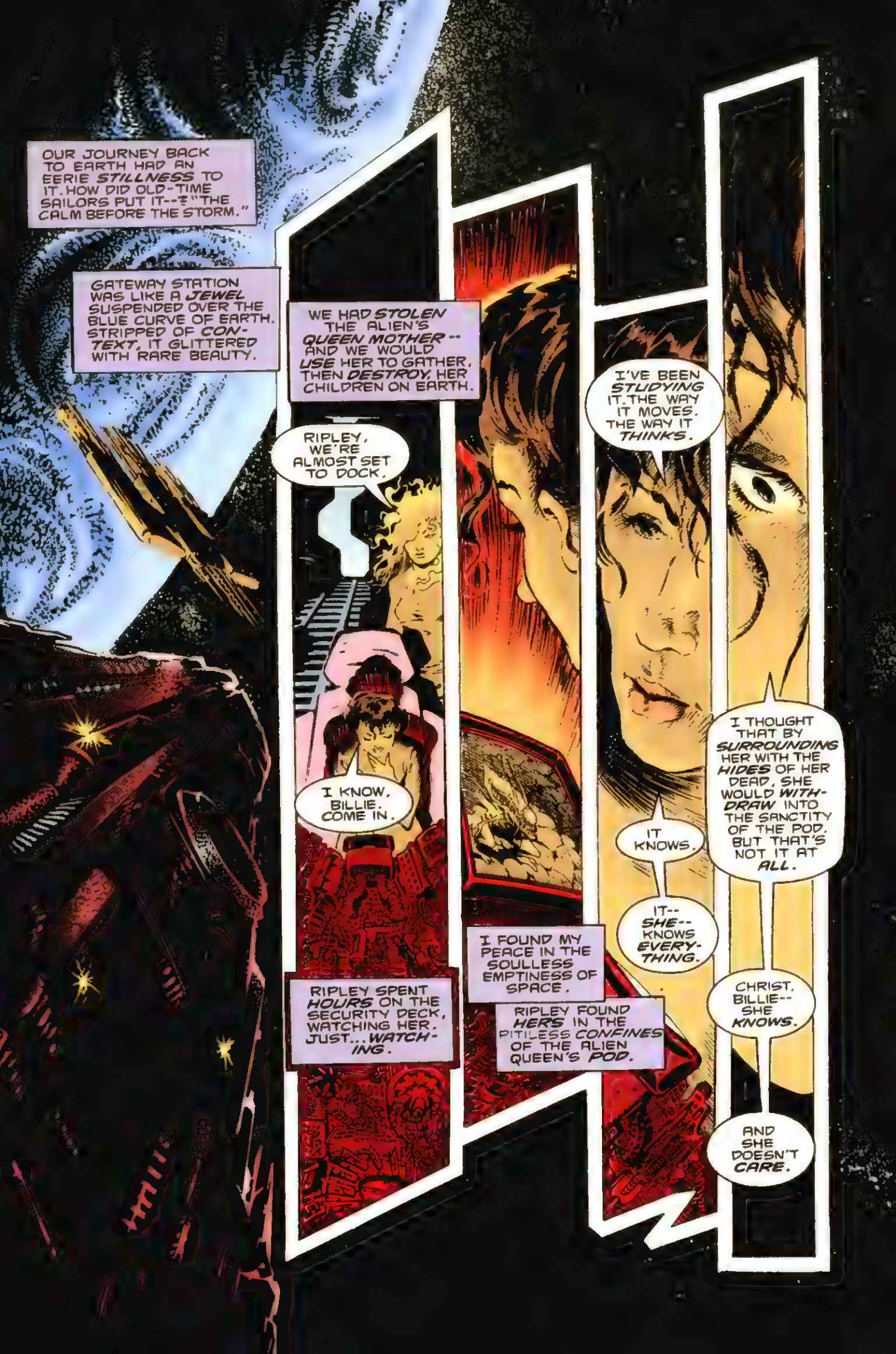
THAT SHOULD BE EASY.

WE'VE BEEN PRETENDING FOR MONTHS-- PRETENDING THERE'S A CHANCE, PRETENDING THERE'S A REASON TO--

-- GO ON.







OUR JOURNEY BACK TO EARTH HAD AN EERIE STILLNESS TO IT. HOW DID OLD-TIME SAILORS PUT IT--? "THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM."

GATEWAY STATION WAS LIKE A JEWEL SUSPENDED OVER THE BLUE CURVE OF EARTH. STRIPPED OF CONTEXT, IT GLITTERED WITH RARE BEAUTY.

WE HAD *STOLEN* THE ALIEN'S *QUEEN MOTHER*-- AND WE WOULD *USE* HER TO GATHER, THEN *DESTROY* HER CHILDREN ON EARTH.

RIPLEY, WE'RE ALMOST SET TO DOCK.

I KNOW, BILLIE. COME IN.

RIPLEY SPENT HOURS ON THE SECURITY DECK, WATCHING HER. JUST... WATCHING.

I FOUND MY PEACE IN THE SOULLESS EMPTINESS OF SPACE.

RIPLEY FOUND *HER'S* IN THE PITILESS CONFINES OF THE ALIEN QUEEN'S *POD*.

I'VE BEEN STUDYING IT. THE WAY IT MOVES. THE WAY IT THINKS.

IT KNOWS.

IT-- SHE-- KNOWS EVERYTHING.

I THOUGHT THAT BY SURROUNDING HER WITH THE HIDES OF HER DEAD, SHE WOULD WITHDRAW INTO THE SANCTITY OF THE POD. BUT THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.

CHRIST, BILLIE-- SHE KNOWS.

AND SHE DOESN'T CARE.

GATEWAY STATION.

...WE'VE LOST ALL COMMUNICATION WITH EARTH SINCE YOU LEFT. ATMOSPHERIC *STATIC* MAKES TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION ALMOST *IMPOSSIBLE*.

WHAT-- WHAT ABOUT THE SATELLITE UPLINKS? THE LITTLE GIRL--?

ANYONE LEFT ON EARTH BELONGS TO THE ALIEN. THAT LITTLE GIRL'S DEAD.

FOR HER SAKE, I *PRAY* SHE'S DEAD.

THERE'S SOMETHING *ELSE*-- WE PICKED IT UP NOT LONG AFTER YOU LEFT...

WE'VE BEEN GETTING BIZARRE *TEMPERATURE* READINGS FROM THE SURVIVING HIGH ALTITUDE WEATHER MARKERS. THE GLOBAL TEMPERATURE HAS *DROPPED* AN AVERAGE OF FIFTEEN TO TWENTY *DEGREES*.

GOD.

NO.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

IT'S NOTHING *TERRAN*--WE CHECKED.

MY GOD.

IT'S THE *OTHER*-- THE ONE THAT *SPOKE* TO ME ON *RIM*...

...WE *BROUGHT* IT HERE.

NEAR AS WE CAN TELL, THE METHODOLOGY MIMICS OUR OWN *TERRAFORMING* TECHNOLOGY.

WE TRACKED THE ENERGY SOURCE INTO SPACE AND MANAGED TO PULL A LONG-RANGE *CHROMA* OFF ONE OF THE SURVIVING *SPY* SATELLITES.



ITS COMPANION *DIED* ON ACHERON, LONG BEFORE THE NOSTROMO--LONG BEFORE ANY OF IT. IT *FOLLOWED* US AS WE SEARCHED FOR THE ALIEN'S HOME, THEN IT *RE-TURNED* WITH US TO EARTH.

WE THOUGHT IT *SHARED* OUR HATRED OF THE ALIEN--

--BUT IT WANTED *EARTH*, NOT REVENGE.

WE'RE WASTING TIME, DAMMIT-- IT DOESN'T MATTER. NOTHING MATTERS EXCEPT THOSE THINGS.

DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME, RIPLEY? THAT *CREATURE*-- WHATEVER THE HELL IT IS-- IS EMPLOYING *TERRAFORMING* TECHNOLOGY. THERE WON'T BE ANY EARTH LEFT IF WE DON'T--

YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?

THIS ISN'T ABOUT EARTH.

THIS IS FOR ME. ONCE THOSE CREATURES ARE DEAD-- I'M THROUGH WITH IT.

I SEE--IT'S EASIER WHEN YOU JUST DON'T GIVE A SHIT.

THE MILITARY, THE CORPORATION--THEY BROUGHT THE ALIEN TO EARTH FOR A REASON. THEY TRIED TO BUY ME THE SAME WAY.

I OWE THE ALIEN SOME PAYBACK, BUT I DON'T OWE YOUR EARTH A GODDAMN THING. WE'RE GOING TO FINISH THIS--NOW.

GREAT-- FIRST WE GRAVITY-DRIVE ACROSS THE GALAXY TO PLAY TAXICAB WITH SOME ALIEN THING, AND NOW WE'RE ORDERED BACK TO EARTH.

I'LL GO ALONG FOR THE RIDE, BUT I'M TELLING YOU-- IF RIPLEY TRIES TO PULL ANOTHER GUN ON ME, THERE'S GOING TO BE TROUBLE.

YEAH--THIS TIME SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY SHOOT.



RIPLEY AND WILKS LED THE OTHERS TO THE SHIP, READYING THEMSELVES FOR THEIR FINAL STRUGGLE. THE FLAME OF HATRED BURNED BRIGHT IN RIPLEY'S EYES.

THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO COME, BILLIE. YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE.

I KNOW.

I'D SEEN IT SO MANY TIMES BEFORE. IN WILKS. IN GENERAL SPEARS. IN MYSELF.

I WATCHED THEM DISAPPEAR BEHIND THE COLD STEEL OF THE AIRLOCK-- DISAPPEAR INTO RIPLEY'S OBSESSION--

--ALL THE TIME KNOWING WHAT I WOULD HAVE TO DO.

ORONA'S BOMBS WERE PART OF AN OLD-STYLE MILITARY ARSENAL, LOCATED IN A REMOTE MOUNTAIN-SIDE BUNKER. THAT WAS RIPLEY'S TARGET.

THE ALIEN QUEEN MOTHER WOULD GATHER HER FLOCK FOR NUCLEAR ARMAGEDDON. THOSE NOT KILLED BY THE INITIAL BLAST WOULD BE LEFT WITHOUT ANY FUNCTION.

I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME.

--AND YET, IN A *REAL* WAY, SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO WOULD TRULY UNDERSTAND WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO DO.

LOOKS LIKE THE MILITARY BOMB SPECIALISTS WERE IN QUITE A *HURRY* TO GET IN.

YOUR DR. ORONA HAD THEM WIRE THE NUKES INTO A SEQUENTIAL DETONATION PATTERN JUST PRIOR TO EVACUATION.

GOD ONLY KNOWS.

MAYBE THE SEQUENCE WAS INTERRUPTED BY SOME *NATURAL* PHENOMENON. THESE WEAPONS WERE NEVER MEANT TO WITHSTAND EXPOSURE TO THE ELEMENTS--

GOD ONLY KNOWS WHY THEY DIDN'T BLOW THE FIRST TIME.

--THERE'S ENOUGH FIREPOWER HERE TO LEVEL THE *CONTINENT*, BUT THE BOMBS THEMSELVES ARE FRAGILE AS DUST.

RIPLEY--
WILKS!

DOWN
HERE!

I THINK I FIGURED OUT WHY THE BOMBS NEVER DETONATED--



YOU DON'T
HAVE TO LIKE
IT, TULLY--
JUST FIX
IT.



--AND IT'S MORE
THAN *CORROSION*.
SOMEBODY DECIDED
TO PUT A STOP TO
THIS COUNTDOWN
PERMANENTLY.

WHAT THE
HELL DID THIS?
DOESN'T LOOK
LIKE ANY KIND OF
CONVENTIONAL
BURN.

I DON'T
LIKE THIS--
I DON'T
LIKE IT
ONE BIT.

RADIO THE
DROP SHIP.
THIS PROJECT'S
A GO.



--ZZZZZZ-- THEY'VE
LOCALIZED THE
PROBLEM AND--ZZZZ--
REWIRING A SECOND
DETONATOR--NO SIGN
OF INFESTATION, BUT--
ZZZZZZ-- STAND BY
JUST IN CASE--

YOUR SIGNAL'S
BREAKING UP, BREWSTER
--ENERGY FIELD'S PLAY-
ING HELL WITH
COMMUNICATIONS--

--CONTINUE WITH TEN-
MINUTE UPDATES AND CON-
TINUOUS MOTION SWEEPS.
YOU PICK UP MOVEMENT, GET
THE HELL OUT OF THERE.



WHAT
THE--?

SIR, DID
YOU AUTHORIZE
A LOWER
DECK LAUNCH
SEQUENCE?



WHAT?

GET ME AN
OPEN LINE
INTO THAT
VESSEL!

SOMEONE'S
BROKEN INTO ONE
OF THE *LOADER BAYS*.
JESUS--THEY'RE LAUNCHING
ONE OF THE CARGO SHIPS!



THIS IS CAPTAIN
MCQUADE. IDENTIFY
YOURSELF!

I--I'M
SORRY,
CAPTAIN.

BUT THIS
IS THE
ONLY WAY.

AMY'S
NOT
DEAD.

I CAN
FEEL
IT.

I'D LEARNED A
LOT WATCHING
WILKS. I TRIANGU-
LATED A COURSE
USING THE COORDINATES
FROM AMY'S LAST VIDEO
TRANSMISSION, AND
"BORROWED" THE SHIP'S
GO CODES FROM THE
GATEWAY SECURITY
COMPUTER.

THE CARGO SHIPS
WERE DESIGNED
TO BE PILOTED BY
MAINLINE **FIELD**
SOLDIERS. MOST OF
THE ON-BOARD
SYSTEMS WERE
STRICTLY **AUTOMAT-**
IC.

SHE WAS JUST
ONE LITTLE GIRL,
LOST IN THE RUIN
OF MAN'S GREED
AND **MADNESS.**

WE'D NEVER
EVEN MET--
BUT I **KNEW**
HER.

HER NAME
WAS **AMY--**

--HER NAME
WAS **BILLIE.**

WE WOULD
SURVIVE THIS
TOGETHER--
OR NOT AT
ALL.

I WASN'T SURE WHERE TO
BEGIN-- AND THEN I HEARD
THE SCREAMS. JUST LIKE
BEFORE-- LIKE RIM.
LIKE ALL THE REST...

THE SOUND WAS
CLOSE, REVERBER-
ATING BENEATH THE
BROKEN STREETS.

EACH TIME I ESCAPED
THE ALIEN, IT SEEMED TO
BRING ME BACK. I BEGAN
TO REALIZE THIS WAS
MORE THAN CAPRICIOUS
FATE OR CHANCE--

THE TERRIBLE
SCREAMS GREW
LOUDER, AND I
WANTED TO
JOIN THEM--

--ADD MY VOICE
TO THE RISING
HOWL OF PAIN
AND HORROR.

OH,
MY
GOD--

--IT WAS
DESIGN. IT
WAS MEANT
TO BE.

NOOOO....!

BA-BLAM!

BA-BLAM!
BA-BLAM!
BA-BLAM!

JESUS, GOD--
I DIDN'T WANT
TO DIE.

I COULD FEEL MY SKIN **BLISTER** FROM THE HEAT OF THE BLASTER FIRE. THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF THEM...**THOUSANDS**--

AMY!
AMY--!

POOM!
POOM!

--ALL **ADJUNCTS** OF THEIR QUEEN--DESPERATE TO PROTECT HER. PROTECT HER UNBORN CHILDREN.

GO TO
HELL, YOU
BASTARD!

AS LONG AS I WAS ALIVE, I WAS A **THREAT** TO THEIR SURVIVAL. SOMEHOW, INTUITIVELY, THE ALIEN INTELLIGENCE **KNEW** THAT.

YEAH,
COME
ON...

BLAM

BLAM

I WANTED
AMY--

--THEY
WANTED
ME.



WAAAAH!

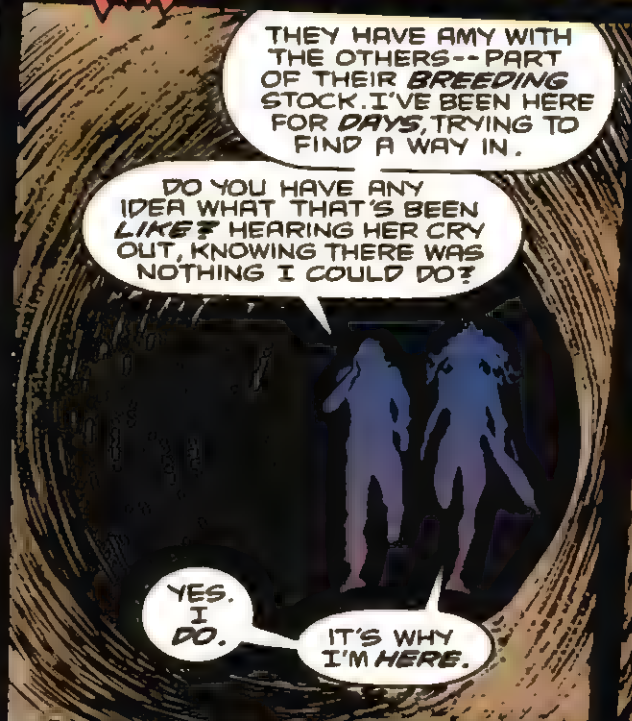


IT'S YOU--
YOUR TRANS-
MISSIONS--

AMY--
IS
SHE--?

MY GOD,
YOU WERE
WATCHING.
YOU SAW--

FOLLOW ME--
WE MAY STILL
MAKE IT OUT OF
HERE ALIVE.



THEY HAVE AMY WITH
THE OTHERS-- PART
OF THEIR BREEDING
STOCK. I'VE BEEN HERE
FOR DAYS, TRYING TO
FIND A WAY IN.

DO YOU HAVE ANY
IDEA WHAT THAT'S BEEN
LIKE? HEARING HER CRY
OUT, KNOWING THERE WAS
NOTHING I COULD DO?

YES.
I
DO.

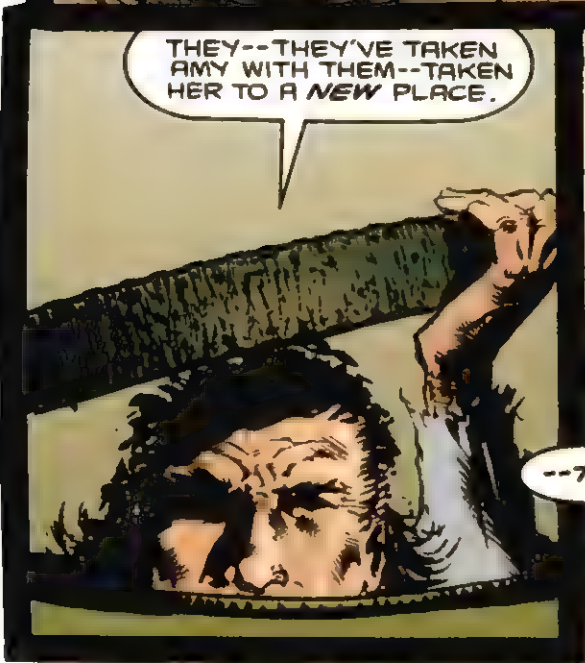
IT'S WHY
I'M HERE.



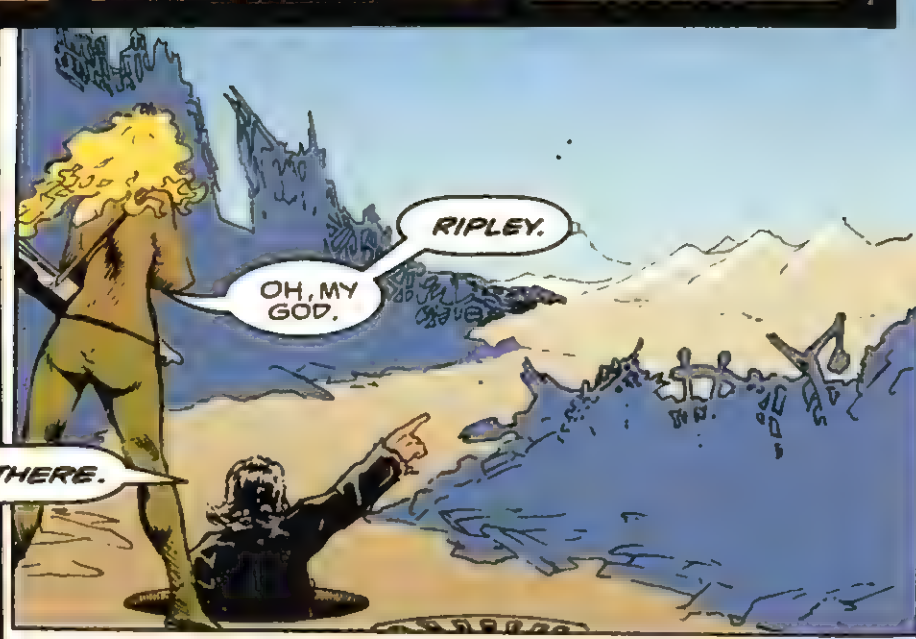
I HAVE
TO FIND
HER.

SOMETHING'S
HAPPENING--
I CAN SENSE
IT. THE CREA-
TURES ARE
MOVING WITH
A NEW SENSE
OF DIREC-
TION.

THEY'VE LEFT
THE UNDERGROUND,
THE CITY--THOSE FEW
YOU KILLED WERE
ALMOST ALL THAT
WERE LEFT.



THEY--THEY'VE TAKEN
AMY WITH THEM--TAKEN
HER TO A NEW PLACE.



RIPLEY.

OH, MY
GOD.

--THERE.



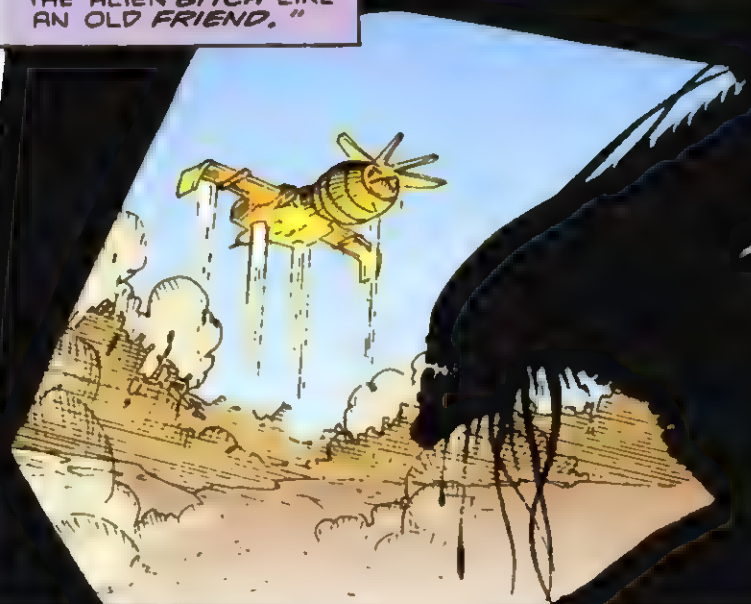
CAN WE PLEASE
LEAVE? THIS
PLACE GIVES ME
THE CREEPS.

THAT'S
IT-- THREE
HOURS AND
COUNTING.

REALLY?
I THINK IT'S
PERFECT.

"THE ALIEN KNOWS DEATH
BETTER THAN ANY OF US.
THIS PLACE IS FILLED
WITH IT. MAYBE THAT
FRIGHTENS YOU--"

"--BUT IT WELCOMES
THE ALIEN BITCH LIKE
AN OLD FRIEND."



BREWSTER--I'M
PICKING UP ANOTHER
SHIP ON THE INBOARD
RADAR. AUTOMATIC SCAN
SAYS IT'S CARGO
CLASS--

--REGISTERED
TO GATEWAY!

THAT'S
IMPOSSIBLE.
DOUBLE CHECK
THE SYSTEM--

"--THEN GET
RIPLEY UP
HERE, *PRONTO!*"

WE'RE
GETTING CLOSE.
GOD, THOSE THINGS
ARE *EVERY-*
WHERE!

WHAT'S
WRONG?

IT'S ONE THING
TO PRE-SET COORDI-
NATES, BUT I'VE NEVER
FLOWN ONE OF THESE
AT CLOSE RANGE.

I'M
SCARED...

SHIT!
WE'RE LOSING
POWER! I DON'T
KNOW HOW TO
STOP IT!

WE'RE
GOING
IN!

...WHAT DO YOU
MEAN, *ANOTHER*
SHIP? GATEWAY HASN'T
CLOCKED ANY GROUND-
BASED EARTH TRAFFIC
FOR *WEEKS!*

IT'S
FROM
GATE-
WAY--

--AND
IT'S ABOUT
TO--

"--CRASH!"

SCREEEEEEEE



NNGHHHH--

HAVE TO--
HAVE TO GET
AWAY FROM
THE *SHIP*.

CHRIST--
I'M SORRY--
I'M SO
SORRY...

YOU
SHOULD
BE.

WHAT THE HELL DID YOU
THINK YOU WERE *DOING* BY
COMING HERE? YOU KNOW WHAT
WE'RE RISKING JUST BY *LAND-*
ING? THE MOUNTAIN'S *ALIVE*
WITH THOSE ALIEN THINGS--AND
THE BOMBS HAVE BEEN *ARMED*.

YOUR
PASSENGER'S
UNCONSCIOUS,
BUT HE'LL
SURVIVE.

AMY'S
FATHER--
IS HE--?

IS *THAT*
WHAT THIS WAS
ABOUT? DAMMIT,
BILLIE--THE LITTLE
GIRL'S *DEAD*.

NO--
THEY'VE
TAKEN HER *WITH*
THEM--

--MAYBE
YOU CAN LEAVE
WITHOUT HER, BUT
I *CAN'T*.

SHE HAD RISKED *EVERY-*
THING TO PULL ME FROM
THE WRECKAGE OF THE
CARGO *SHIP*.

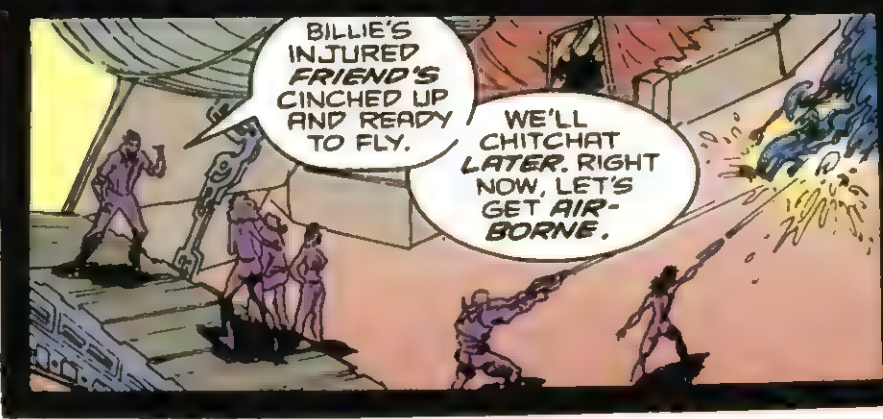


T-MINUS ONE HOUR
AND *COUNTING*,
SURROUNDED BY THESE
GODDAMN *THINGS*--

--I THINK
SOMEONE'S
TRYING TO *TELL*
US SOMETHING!

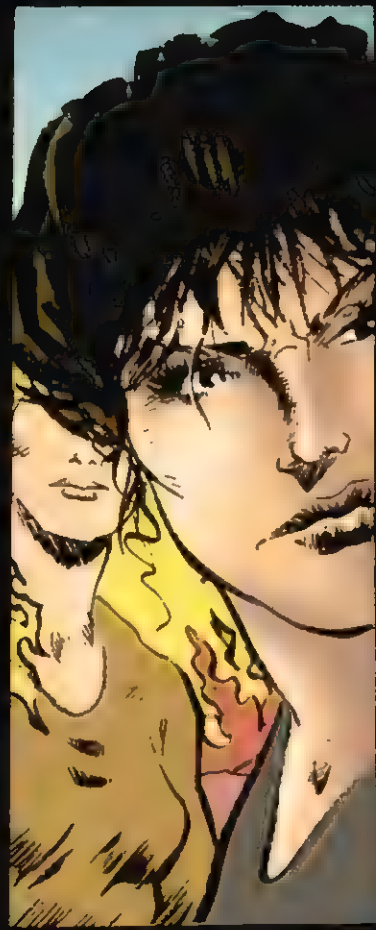


YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT.

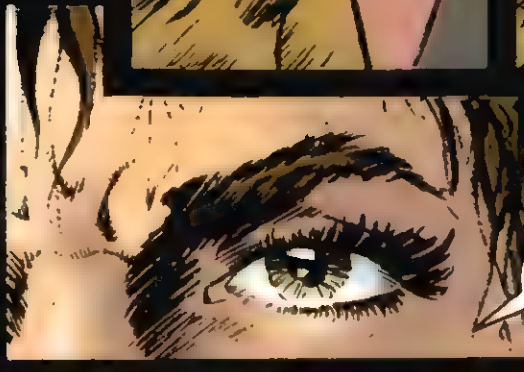


BILLIE'S INJURED FRIEND'S CINCHED UP AND READY TO FLY.

WE'LL CHITCHAT LATER. RIGHT NOW, LET'S GET AIRBORNE.



NOT YET.



TELL BREWSTER TO FIRE UP THE A.P.C. BILLIE AND I ARE GOING BACK IN.



ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? THE MOUNTAIN'S CRAWLING WITH THOSE THINGS.

WE'VE GOT LESS THAN AN HOUR UNTIL DETONATION!



I'M NOT LEAVING HER, WILKS... NOT THIS TIME-- AND NEVER AGAIN.



STAY WITH THE DROP SHIP. GIVE US AS MUCH TIME AS YOU CAN. BUT WHEN THE SHIT COMES DOWN, I WANT YOU TO LEAVE-- AND LET IT GO.



DAMMIT, RIPLEY-- THIS IS SUICIDE. ARE YOU DOING THIS FOR THAT LITTLE GIRL? OR FOR YOURSELF?



DOES IT MATTER?

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, WILKS--



--NOW GET
THE HELL *OUT*
OF HERE.

RIPLEY HAD SPENT
YEARS TRYING TO
FORGET ALL SHE HAD
LEFT BEHIND. *MORE*
THAN FAMILY AND
CAREER--

--SHE'D LOST
HER SELF-RESPECT.
HER *DIGNITY*.

CHUNK!

I KNEW WHAT
WILKS WAS THINKING,
BUT HE WAS WRONG.
THIS WASN'T SUI-
CIDE. RIPLEY AND
I DIDN'T WANT
TO *DIE*--

--WE WERE TRYING
TO FIND A WAY TO
LIVE. MAYBE THE
LITTLE GIRL COULD
SHOW US.

HOLD
ON,
BILLIE--

--WE'RE
GOING IN.

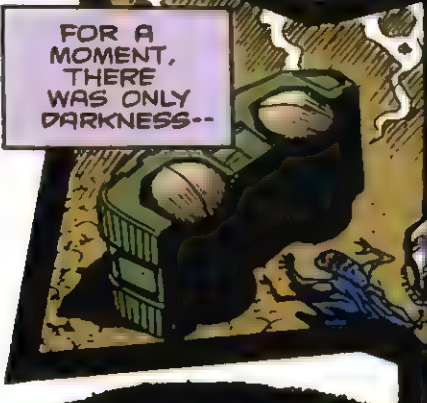
SON OF
A BITCH!

WE'RE STARTING
TO LOSE SYSTEM
CONTROL. THE GODDAMN
ACID MUST BE EATING
THROUGH THE HYDRAU-
LICS --

WHAT'S
THAT
MEAN--?

IT
MEANS
I'M
LOSING
HER--
I'M
LOS--

ERRRRK



FOR A
MOMENT,
THERE
WAS ONLY
DARKNESS--



-- AND THEN
THERE WAS LIGHT.



RIPLEY **BLEW** THE
EXPLOSIVE BOLTS ON
THE SIDE HATCH AND
CLIMBED OUT TO FACE
HER DEMONS.



FIND
HER, BILLIE--
JUST FIND
HER.



I FOLLOWED CLOSE
BEHIND, READY TO
FACE MY OWN.



AMY--!
AMY!



BLAM

TALK TO
ME--
AMY--GOD,
PLEASE!



BLAM

HELP
ME...

AMY--!

OH,
GOD!

HANG ON,
HONEY-- JUST
HANG ON!

I KNEW
YOU WERE
ALL RIGHT--
I KNEW
IT!

HOLD ME--
PLEASE DON'T
LET THEM TAKE
ME AGAIN...

PLEASE--!

NOOOO!

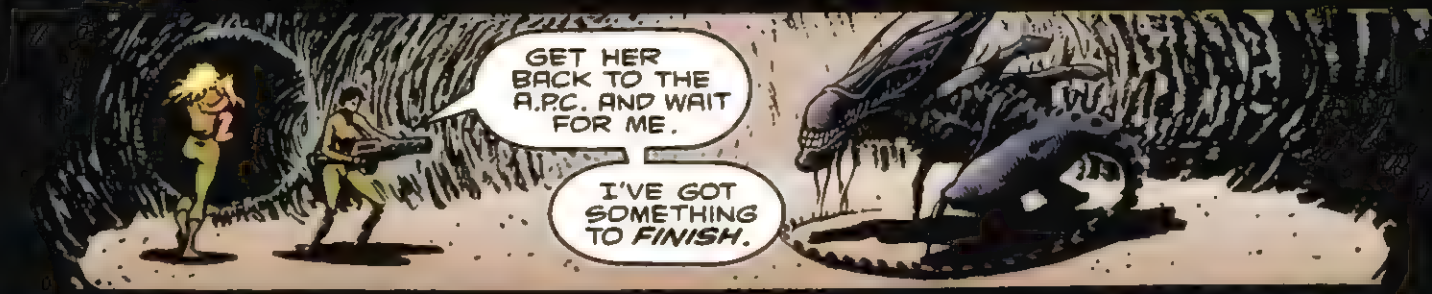
HEY,
BITCH--



--IT'S
ME YOU
WANT.

BILLIE--
MOVE OVER
HERE WITH
ME.

THAT'S WHY
YOU HAD YOUR
BABIES KEEP THE
LITTLE GIRL ALIVE--
YOU **KNEW** WE'D
COME FOR HER.



GET HER
BACK TO THE
A.P.C. AND WAIT
FOR ME.

I'VE GOT
SOMETHING
TO **FINISH**.



FIFTEEN MINUTES AND
THIS WHOLE MOUNTAIN'S
GOING TO BE SO MUCH
DUST-- BUT THAT'S NOT
THE POINT, IS IT? **THIS**
IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT--

--YOU
AND
ME.

I THOUGHT I'D
LET THE BOMBS
FINISH YOU, BUT
IT'S **BETTER**
THIS WAY.

COME
ON, TAKE
A GOOD
LOOK...

...IT'S THE
LAST THING
YOU'LL EVER
SEE.

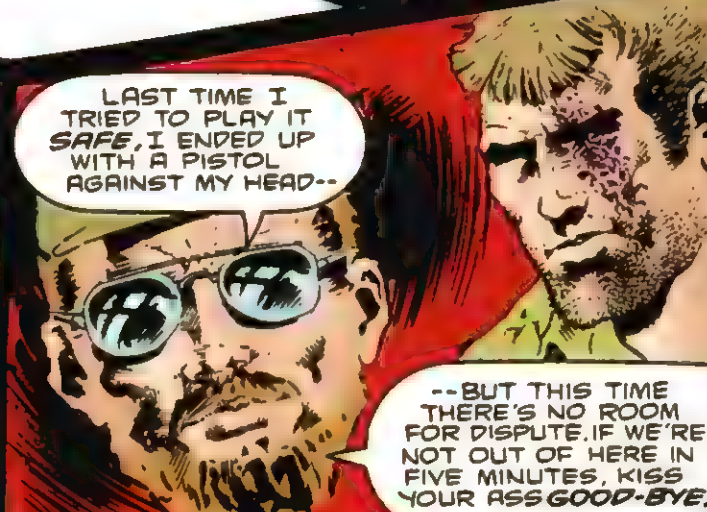
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA



DAMN IT, RIPLEY, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?

TWELVE MINUTES AND COUNTING.

WE'RE EATING UP OUR SAFETY MARGIN BUT QUICK.



LAST TIME I TRIED TO PLAY IT SAFE, I ENDED UP WITH A PISTOL AGAINST MY HEAD--

--BUT THIS TIME THERE'S NO ROOM FOR DISPUTE. IF WE'RE NOT OUT OF HERE IN FIVE MINUTES, KISS YOUR ASS GOOD-BYE.



TWELVE MINUTES TO DETONATION-- WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT-SIDE.

CHRIST, RIPLEY, THE A.P.C.'S TOTALLED--

--I DON'T THINK THEY'RE GOING TO LET US WALK OUT.



WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT WALKING?

GET INSIDE THE A.P.C.-- NOW.



WHAT THE HELL ARE WE DOING, RIPLEY?

IT WILL TAKE THOSE THINGS A COUPLE OF MINUTES TO SQUEEZE INSIDE. THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH TIME.



THEY DESIGNED THIS ESCAPE POD FOR QUICK EXITS IN CASE OF INTERNAL CORE DAMAGE--

--IT'S SUPPOSED TO BLOW UP AND OUT--



HOLD TIGHT--!

--BUT WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE THE SPECIFICATIONS!



BLAM!

RIGHT, THAT'S IT. WE'RE *OUT* OF HERE. I'M SORRY, MAN, BUT--

WAIT A MINUTE-- WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

MY GOD-- IT LOOKS LIKE SOME SORT OF PROJECTILE-- OR ESCAPE POD!

TAKE 'ER DOWN-- NOW!

I REMEMBER THE REST OF IT IN ISOLATED FRAGMENTS. WILKS SAID THE POD'S INTERNAL CHUTE SLOWED US DOWN, SOFTENING OUR IMPACT.

ALL I KNEW-- ALL I CARED-- WAS THAT AMY WAS SAFE.

THE NEXT THING
I REMEMBER IS
LYING IN THE DROP
SHIP'S SICKBAY--
AND RIPLEY
STANDING OVER ME.

SHE WANTED TO
HOLD ME, TELL ME
EVERYTHING WOULD
BE ALL RIGHT--BUT
SHE WAS AFRAID.

ONLY HALF-
CONSCIOUS, I WAS
A LITTLE GUY
AGAIN-- AND I
TRUSTED HER.

ARE--ARE
WE GOING TO SLEEP
ALL THE WAY
HOME?

GOD,
YES, ALL
THE WAY
HOME--

--AND
I'LL
NEVER
LEAVE
YOU.

I DRIFTED
TO SLEEP
IN RIPLEY'S
ARMS,
KNOWING
SHE'D STILL
BE THERE
WHEN I
AWOKE--

-- KNOWING
IT WAS FINALLY
OVER.

IT WAS WHILE
RECOVERING
ON GATEWAY
THAT I DECIDED
TO WRITE THIS
DIARY-- MY
RECORD OF
WHAT HAD HAP-
PENED. I HOPE
IT WILL SERVE
BOTH AS A
REMEMBRANCE--

-- AND A
WARNING.

RIPLEY, WILKS, TULLY,
BALK-- THEY WERE
ALIVE. THEY HAD FACED
THE ALIEN AND SUR-
VIVED. NO, IT WAS MORE
THAN THAT-- THEY HAD
CONQUERED.

I WOULD NEVER TELL
THEM THE TRUTH!
WHAT IT TOLD ME
VISCERALLY AS WE
LANDED ON THE ALIEN
QUEEN'S WORLD--

-- WHAT, IN SOME
STRANGE WAY, I
MUST HAVE KNOWN
ALL ALONG!

WE'D
BEEN
USED.

IT DESTROYED THE DETONATOR
CONNECTING ORCA'S BOMBS.
IT HAD CALLED RIPLEY BACK TO
EARTH, IT HAD SENT US IN
SEARCH OF THE QUEEN MOTHER.

IT USED US TO
ERADICATE THE ALIEN
SCOURGE SO IT COULD
TERRAFORM, THEN TAKE
EARTH FOR ITSELF.

FOR AN INSTANT, I FELT
A WAVE OF ANGER.
EVERYTHING WE'D BEEN
THROUGH-- WAS IT ALL
A *SHAM?* A DANCE FOR
"THE OTHER'S" *PLEASURE?*

THEN I REMEMBERED
SOMETHING RIPLEY
HAD SAID: THIS WASN'T
ABOUT EARTH ANY-
MORE.

IT WAS
FOR *US*.

WE'D COME TO *TERMS*
WITH OUR FEAR AND
OUR PAIN. THERE WOULD
BE OTHER WORLDS FOR
US, NEW LIVES *FREE*
OF THE ALIEN.

HUMAN *GREED* AND
RAGE HAD BROUGHT
THE ALIEN TO EARTH.
WE HAD *FAILED*--

-- IT WAS TIME
TO *MOVE ON*.

PERHAPS EARTH'S
NEW INHABITANTS
WOULD *LEARN*
FROM OUR MISTAKES.

PERHAPS
NOT.

THE
END

THEORY OF ALIEN PROPAGATION



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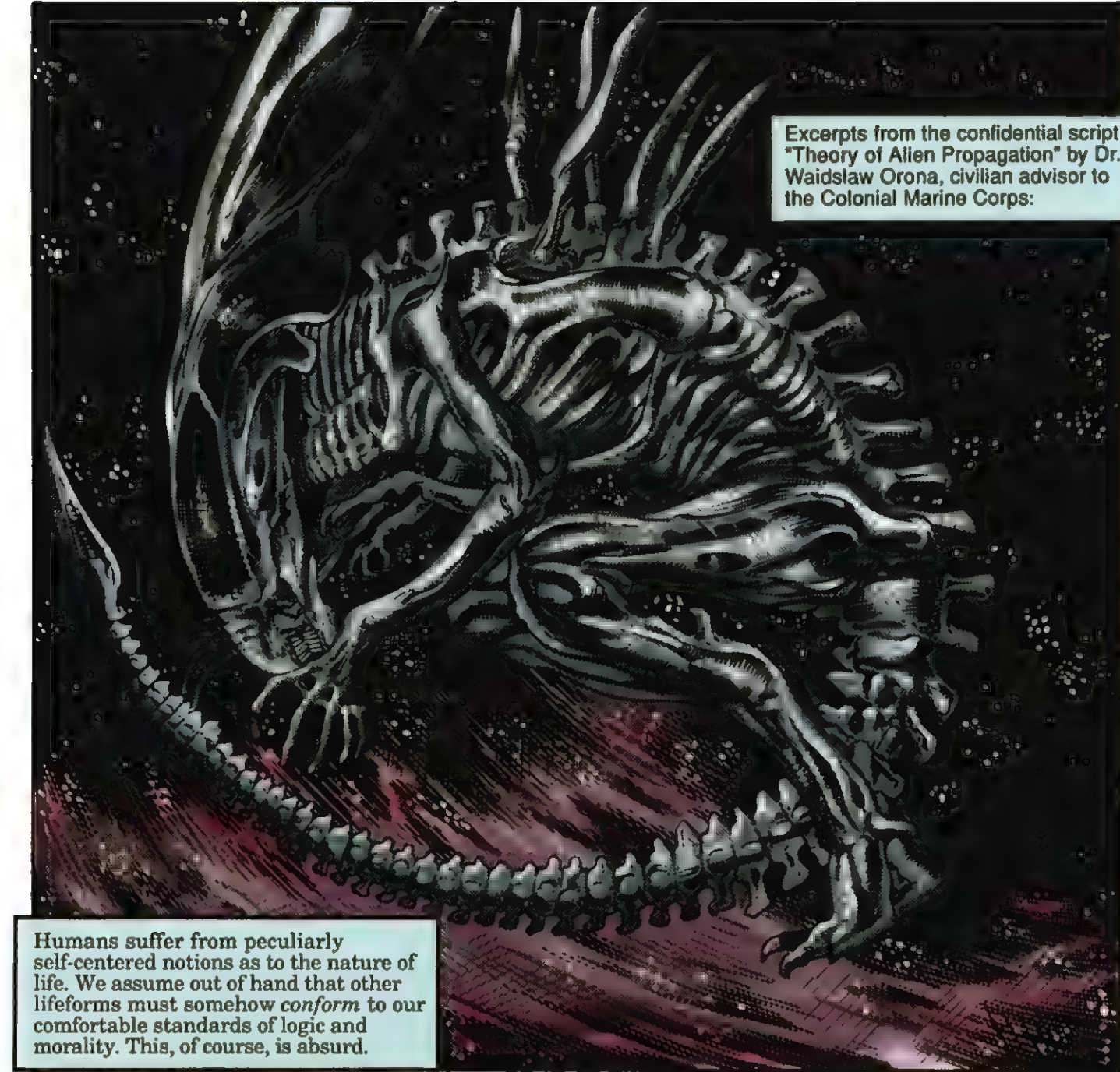
script
MARK VERHEIDEN

art
MARK A. NELSON

colors
CHRIS CHALENOR

title illustration
JOHN BOLTON





Excerpts from the confidential script
"Theory of Alien Propagation" by Dr.
Waidslaw Orona, civilian advisor to
the Colonial Marine Corps:

Humans suffer from peculiarly
self-centered notions as to the nature of
life. We assume out of hand that other
lifeforms must somehow *conform* to our
comfortable standards of logic and
morality. This, of course, is absurd.



Our human "morality" is a
thin tissue of arbitrary
principle, easily ignored
when expedient. Why
should we expect more
from alien lifeforms than
we expect from *ourselves*?

As a matter of practical fact, much
of what we presume to know about
the alien lifeform is conjecture.
However, amidst the theory, there
are two absolute, unequivocal facts:



1) They are not like us.

2) We will *never* truly
understand them.

Judging from the alien's dense exoskeleton and remarkable adaptability, we must assume their homeworld to be a harsh, desolate environment.



We know from the encounter on Rim that the aliens have a Queen-based hierarchy. We also know they form hives to protect their young.

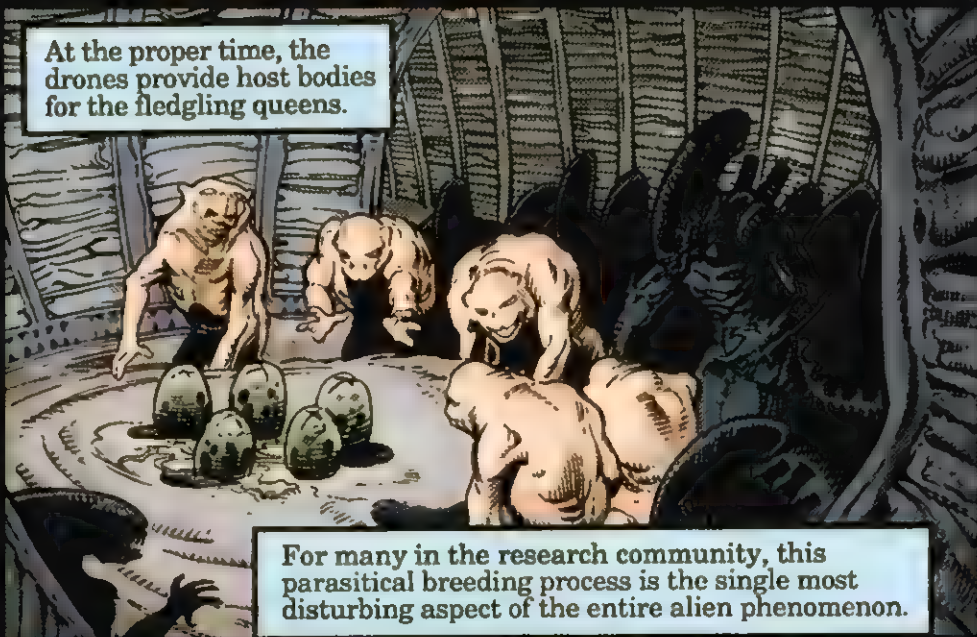


At some point, perhaps cyclical, the hive's queen must sense the instinctive need to propagate new colonies, and lays eggs that will later hatch as queen-larvae.



Given the aliens' legendary "temperament," it's likely that these special breeding eggs are quickly removed from the queen's chamber and sheltered elsewhere.

At the proper time, the drones provide host bodies for the fledgling queens.



For many in the research community, this parasitical breeding process is the single most disturbing aspect of the entire alien phenomenon.



Of course, for the aliens, it is completely natural—their equivalent of giving a bottle to a baby.

The actual incubation period is relatively short, a matter of days or even hours.



Birth is an ordeal of pain and violence.

As the fledgling queens emerge, there may well be a battle for dominance. Imagine a species where the first conscious act of life is *killing*.



Even so, I hesitate to imply any sort of "Darwinian" connotation to these struggles.



Killing may merely be a way for the newborn queen to define its own reality.



Soon, the new queen would lead a contingent of drones away from the old hive.

The drones are the queen's slaves, and there would be nothing more important than the construction of the new hive.

If natural building material were unavailable, perhaps other—*elements*—would be substituted.

One would not describe this as cannibalism so much as a remarkably ruthless *practicality*.

The nesting instinct is a powerful one. Early on, all effort would be concentrated on completing the hive.

The aliens would not think in terms of sacrifice. The hive is all. To assume death has *meaning* to these creatures is to deny their *greatest* power.

All ecosystems exist in a delicate state of balance. This would be as true of the alien homeworld as our own.

At home, the aliens would have any number of natural enemies.



Some would live, some would die, and the alien herd would be kept in check.



The bodies of the dead would be used to reinforce the walls of the hive. The cycle would continue. The ecosystem would survive.

The violent, uncontrollable alien infestations occurred when the creatures were *removed* from their natural habitat.



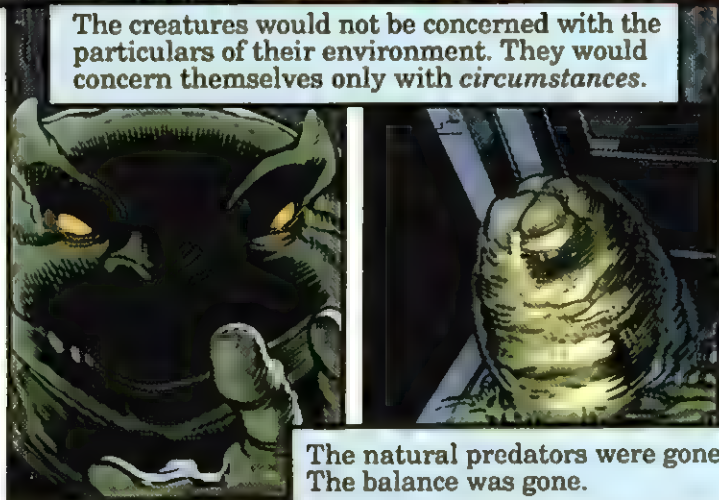
We can only guess how this might have happened. Perhaps it was millions of years ago. Perhaps only decades.



The end result is all that matters. Somehow the aliens were transplanted to other worlds.



The creatures would not be concerned with the particulars of their environment. They would concern themselves only with *circumstances*.



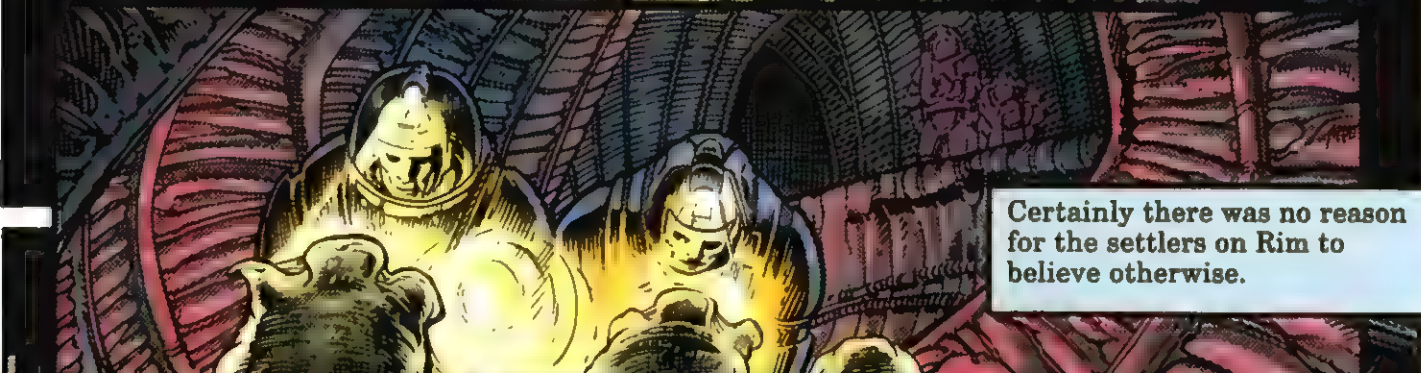
The natural predators were gone. The balance was gone.

All that was left was *prey*.





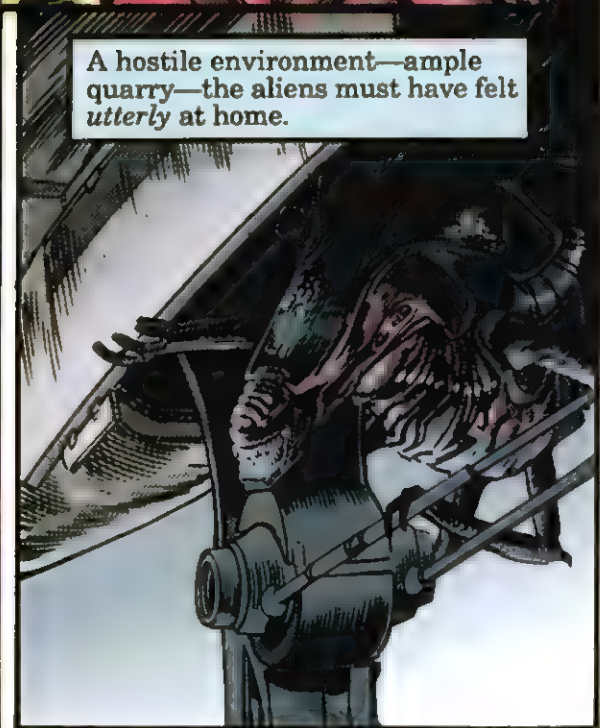
We humans believe our technology has made us invincible—that we've evolved *beyond* the simple notion of predator and prey.



Certainly there was no reason for the settlers on Rim to believe otherwise.



Man has never been comfortable in space. Even with our ships and atmosphere suits and weapons, we are intruders.



A hostile environment—ample quarry—the aliens must have felt *utterly* at home.



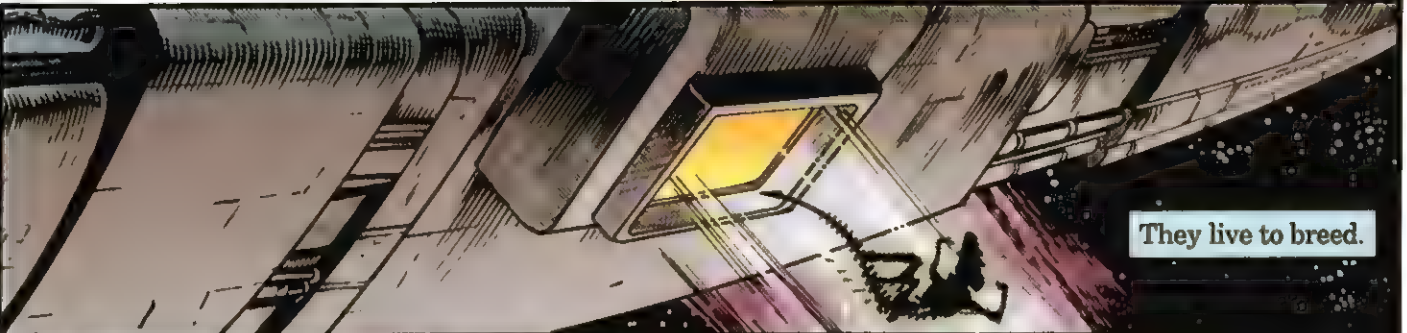
Humans have confused comfort with survival. For us, mere existence isn't enough. We demand the accoutrements of life as well.



The aliens make no such demands. They live in a very simple world.



They live to kill.



They live to breed.



And finally, they survive.

THE ALIEN



script
JOHN ARCUDI

pencils
TONY AKINS

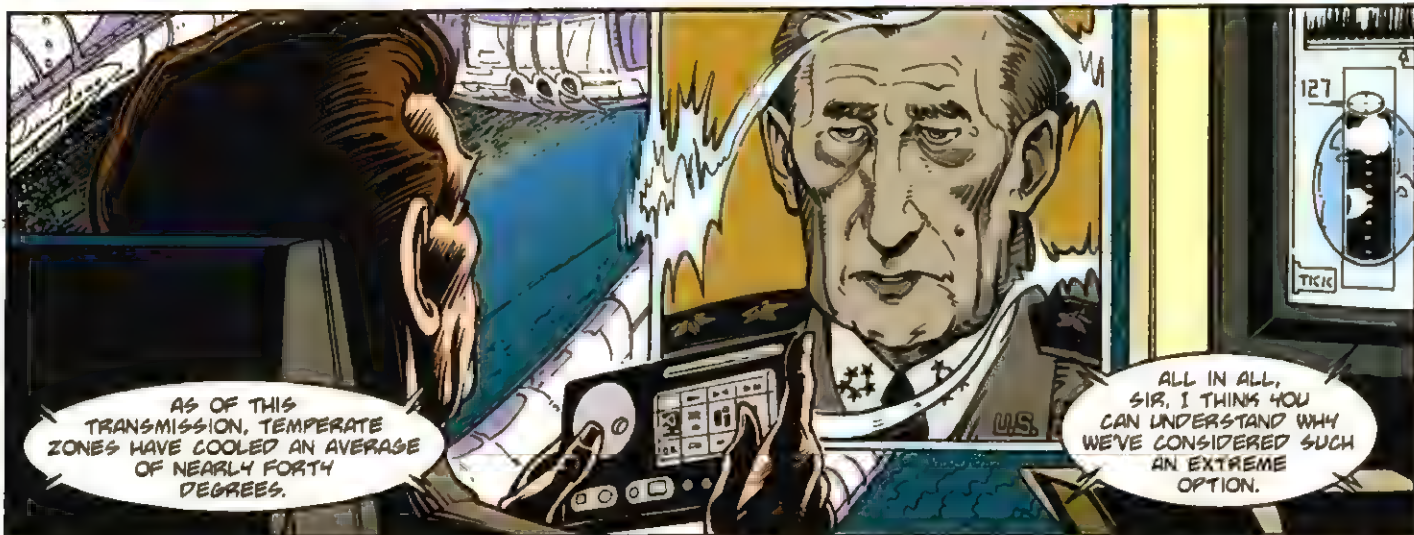
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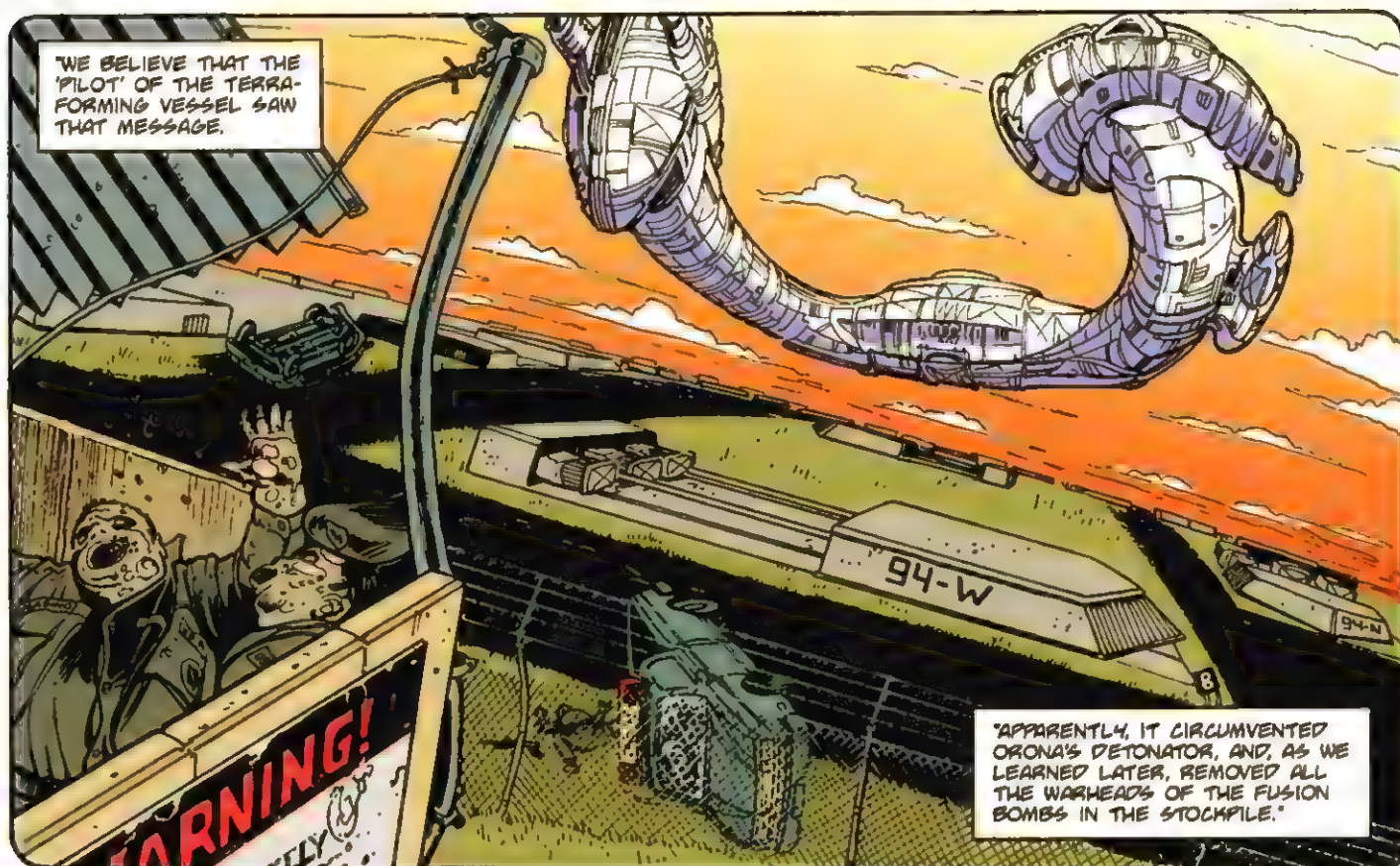
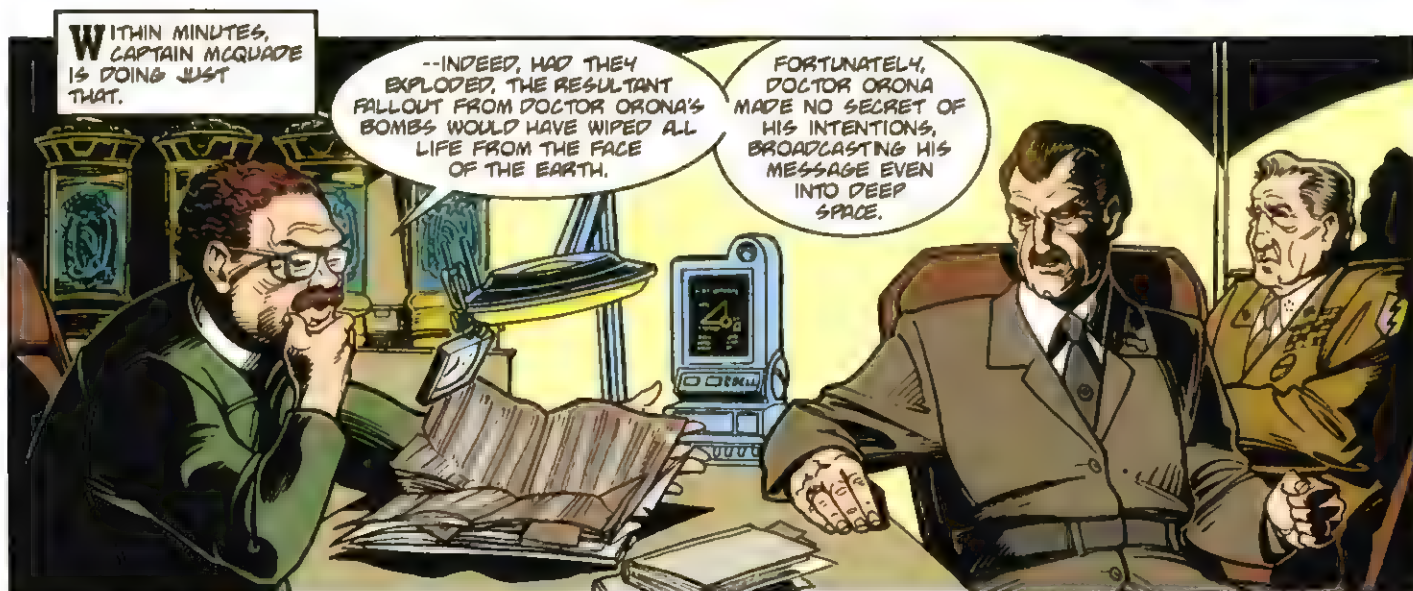
lettering
WILLIE SCHUBERT

title illustration
DEN BEAUVAIS











IT'S A DIARY, WRITTEN BY A GIRL WHO ACTUALLY COMMUNICATED WITH THE "PILOT."

WE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL FROM THIS BOOK--ALTHOUGH THE GIRL ASCRIBES THE "PILOT" WITH SOME PATENTLY ABSURD ABILITIES.

HERE SHE SUGGESTS THAT THE "PILOT" CAN TRANSMIT THOUGHTS--EVEN CONTROL MINDS--OVER LIGHT YEARS OF SPACE.

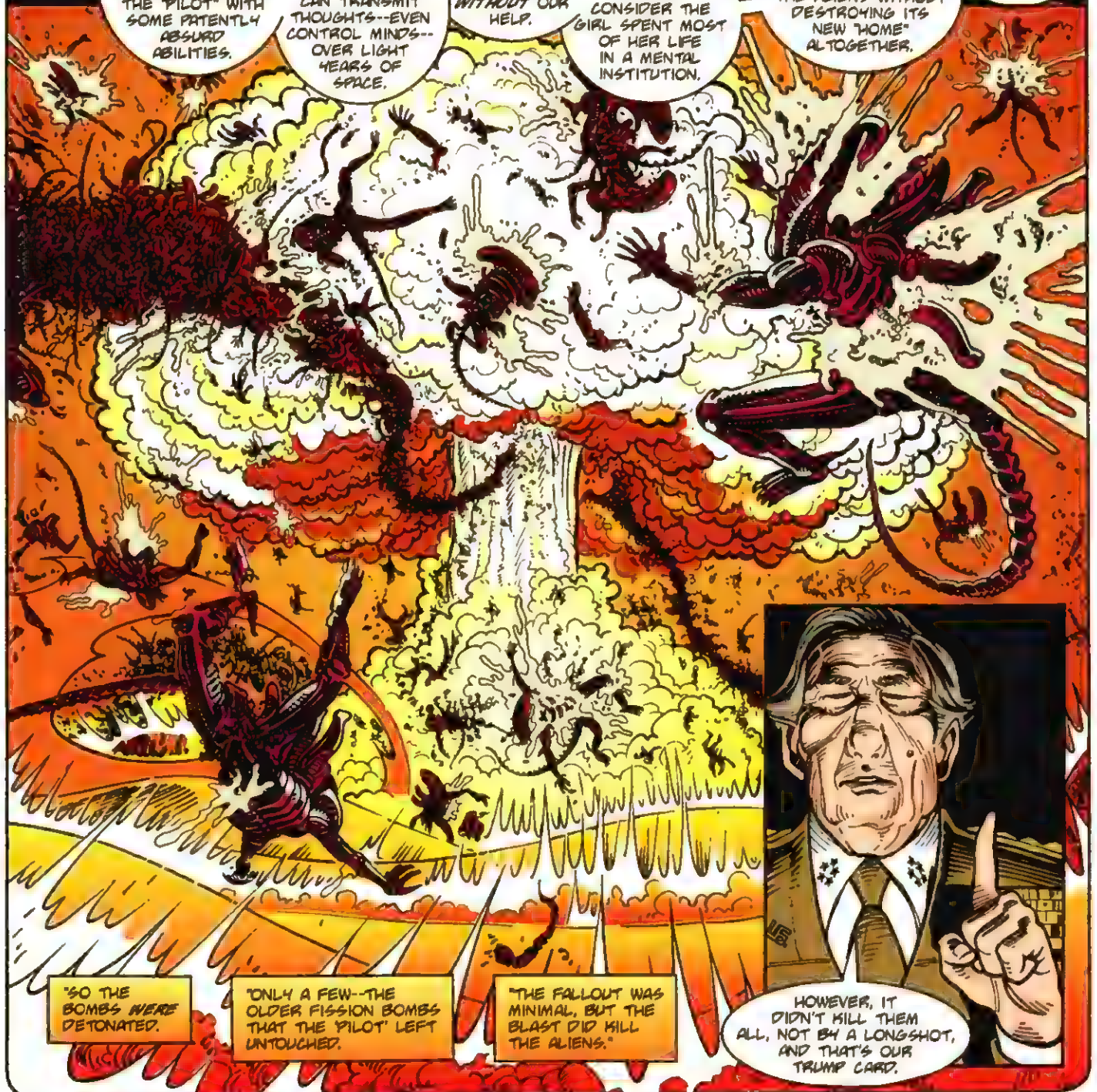
YOU'D THINK THE "PILOT" WERE A GOD. IF THAT WERE SO, IT COULD HAVE EASILY EXTERMINATED THE ALIENS WITHOUT OUR HELP.

OF COURSE YOU MUST CONSIDER THE GIRL SPENT MOST OF HER LIFE IN A MENTAL INSTITUTION.

HOLD ON. WE HELPED THAT THING?

INDIRECTLY, SIR. YOU SEE, IT DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO DESTROY THE ALIENS WITHOUT DESTROYING ITS NEW "HOME" ALTOGETHER.

BUT RIPLEY FIGURED OUT A WAY TO LURE MILLIONS OF THE ALIEN CREATURES TO ORONA'S MOUNTAIN OF BOMBS.



"SO THE BOMBS WERE DETONATED."

"ONLY A FEW--THE OLDER FISSION BOMBS THAT THE 'PILOT' LEFT UNTOUCHED."

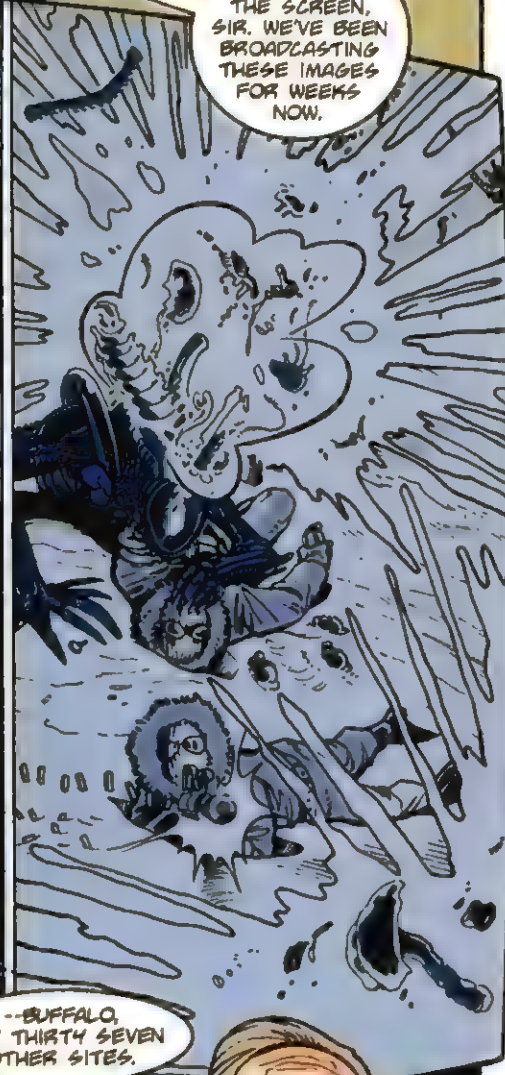
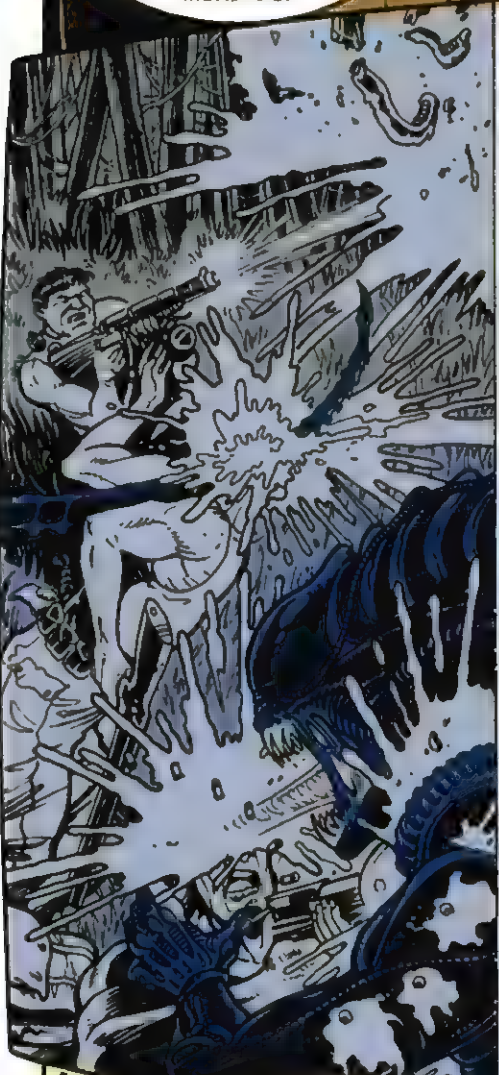
"THE FALLOUT WAS MINIMAL, BUT THE BLAST DID KILL THE ALIENS."

HOWEVER, IT DIDN'T KILL THEM ALL, NOT BY A LONGSHOT, AND THAT'S OUR TRUMP CARD.



WEVE
DETERMINED
THAT THE "PILOT" HATES
AND FEARS THE ALIEN
CREATURES AS MUCH AS
WE DO. PERHAPS
MORE SO.

TAKE
A LOOK AT
THE SCREEN,
SIR. WEVE BEEN
BROADCASTING
THESE IMAGES
FOR WEEKS
NOW.



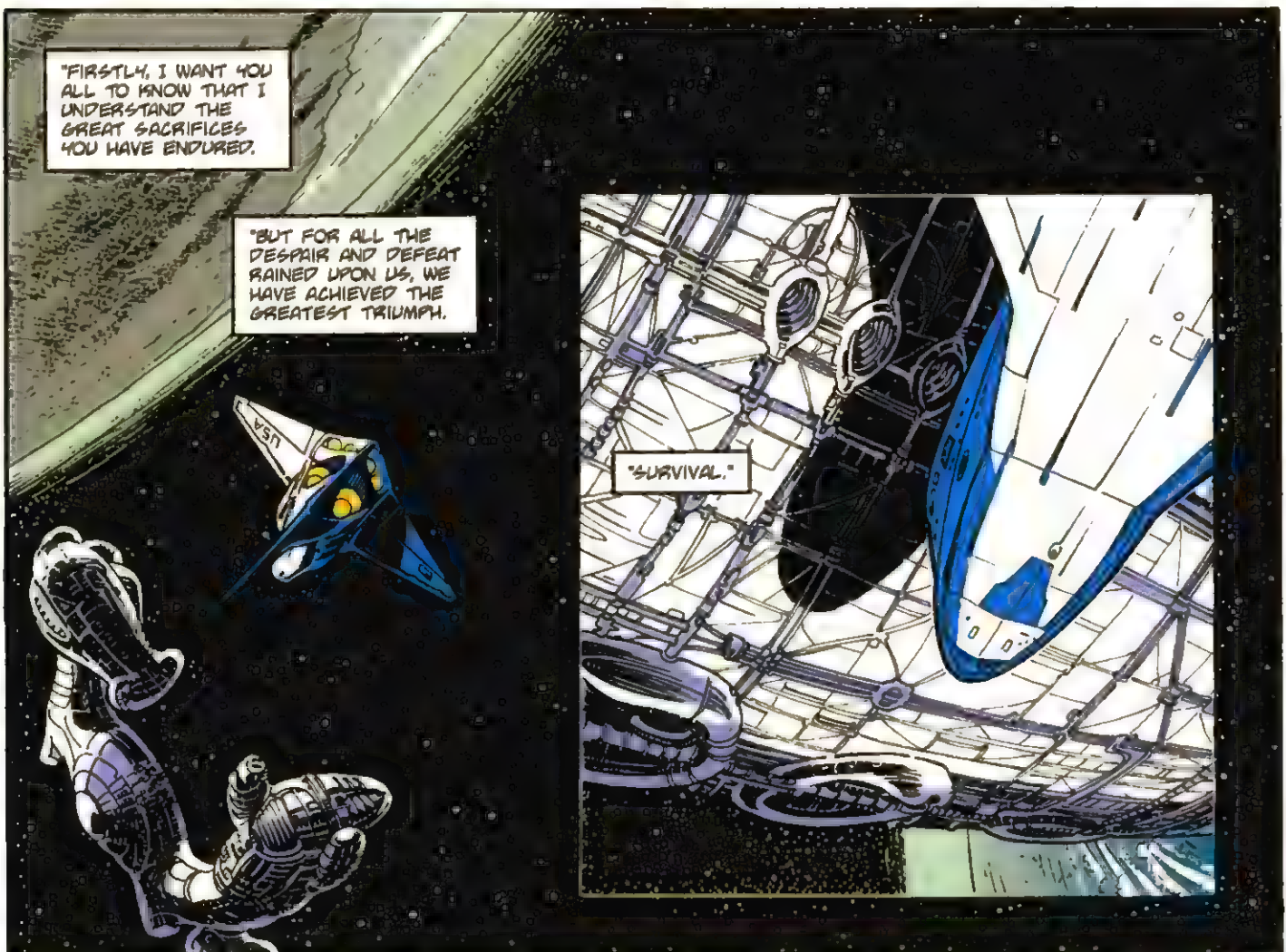
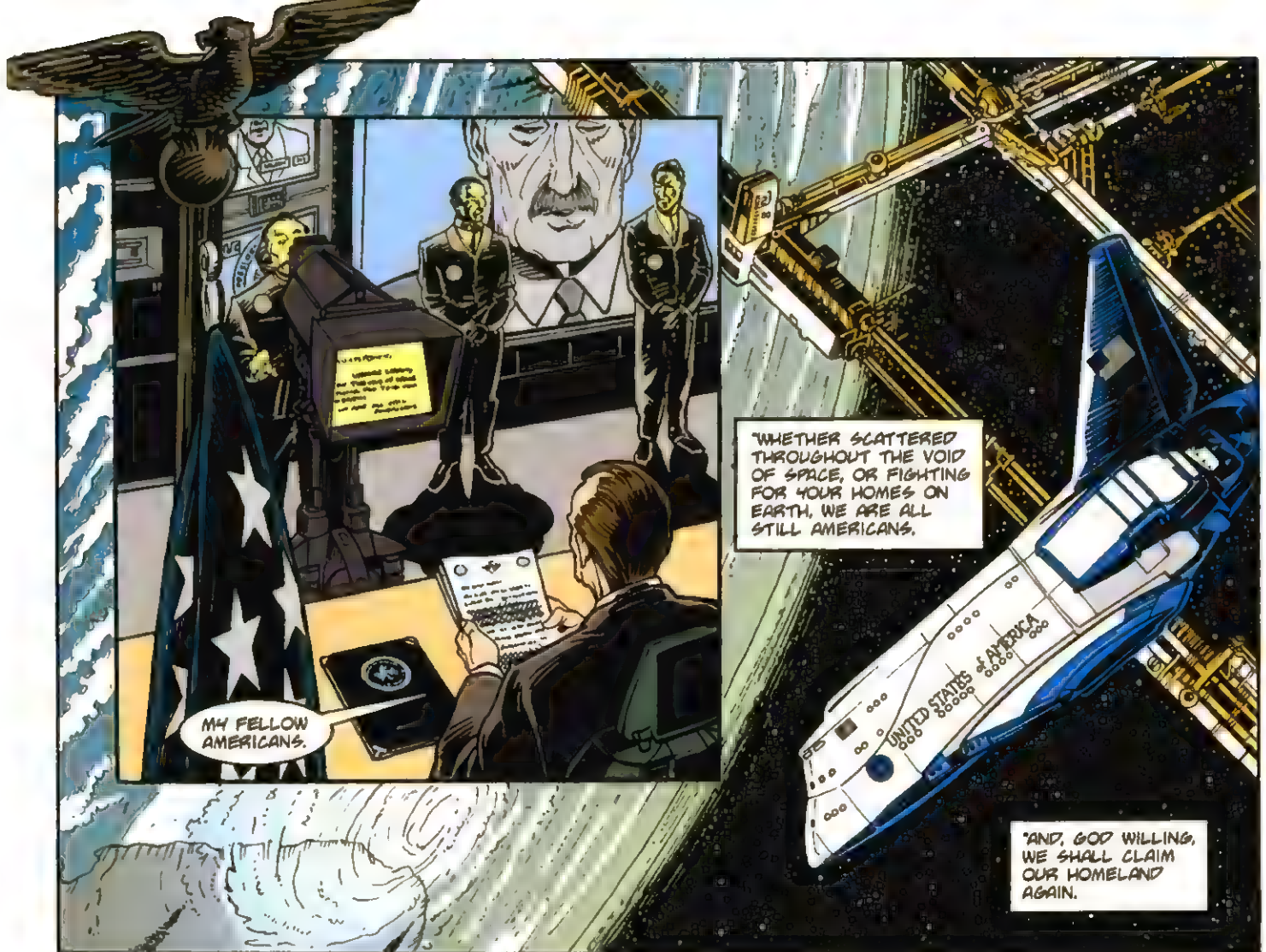
CURRENTLY
ACTIVE HIVES IN
BRAZIL--

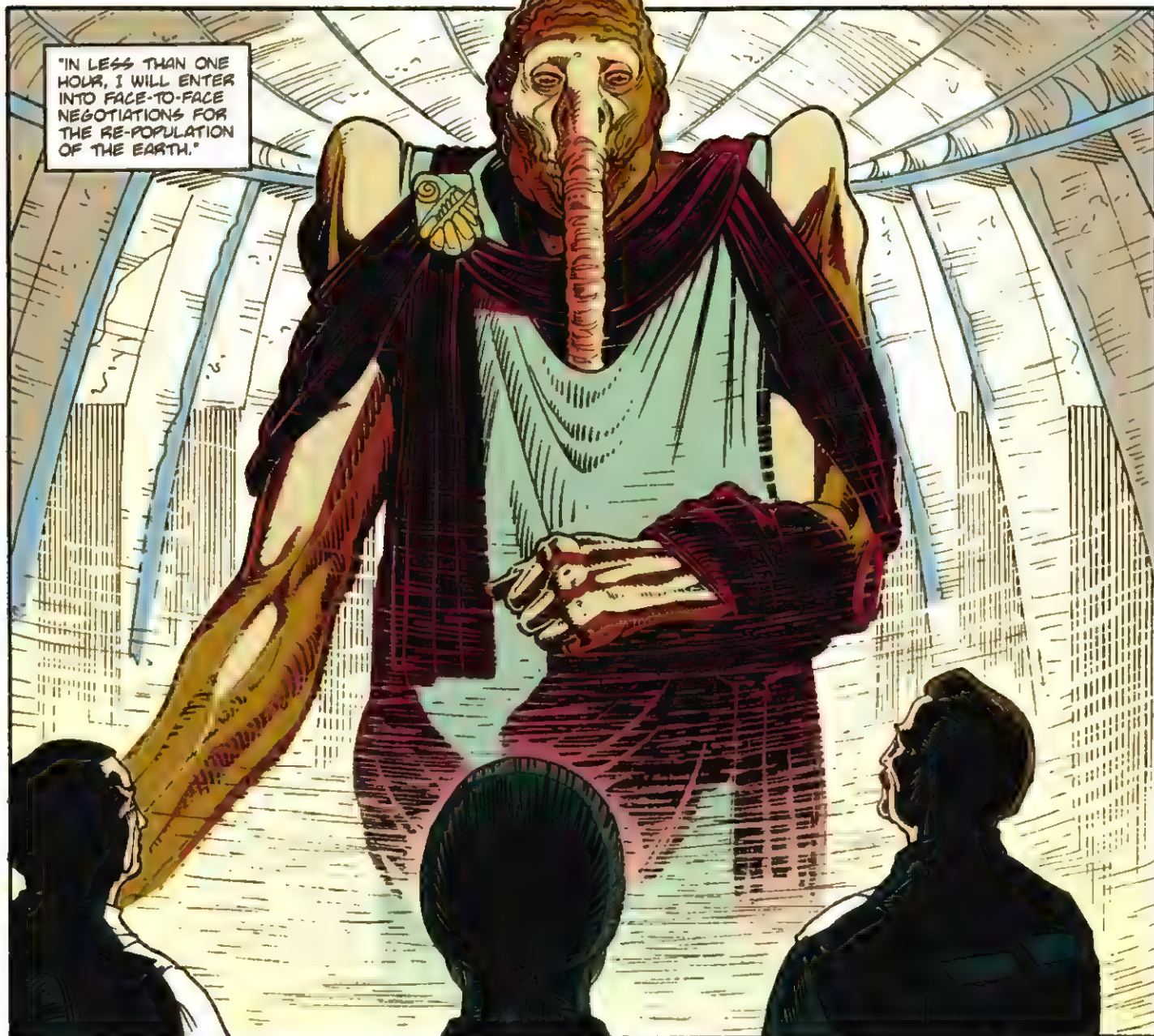
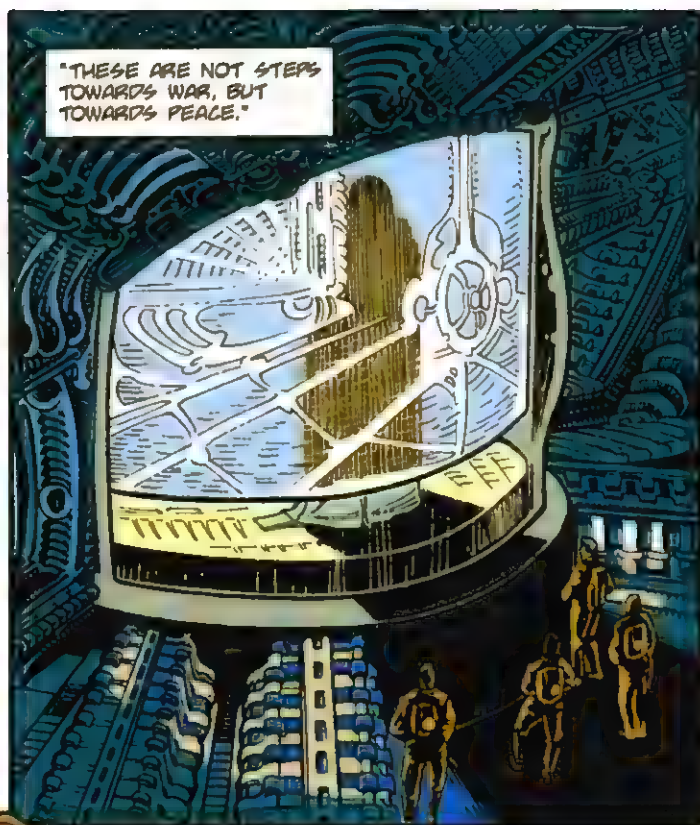
--LOS ANGELES--

--BUFFALO,
AND THIRTY SEVEN
OTHER SITES.







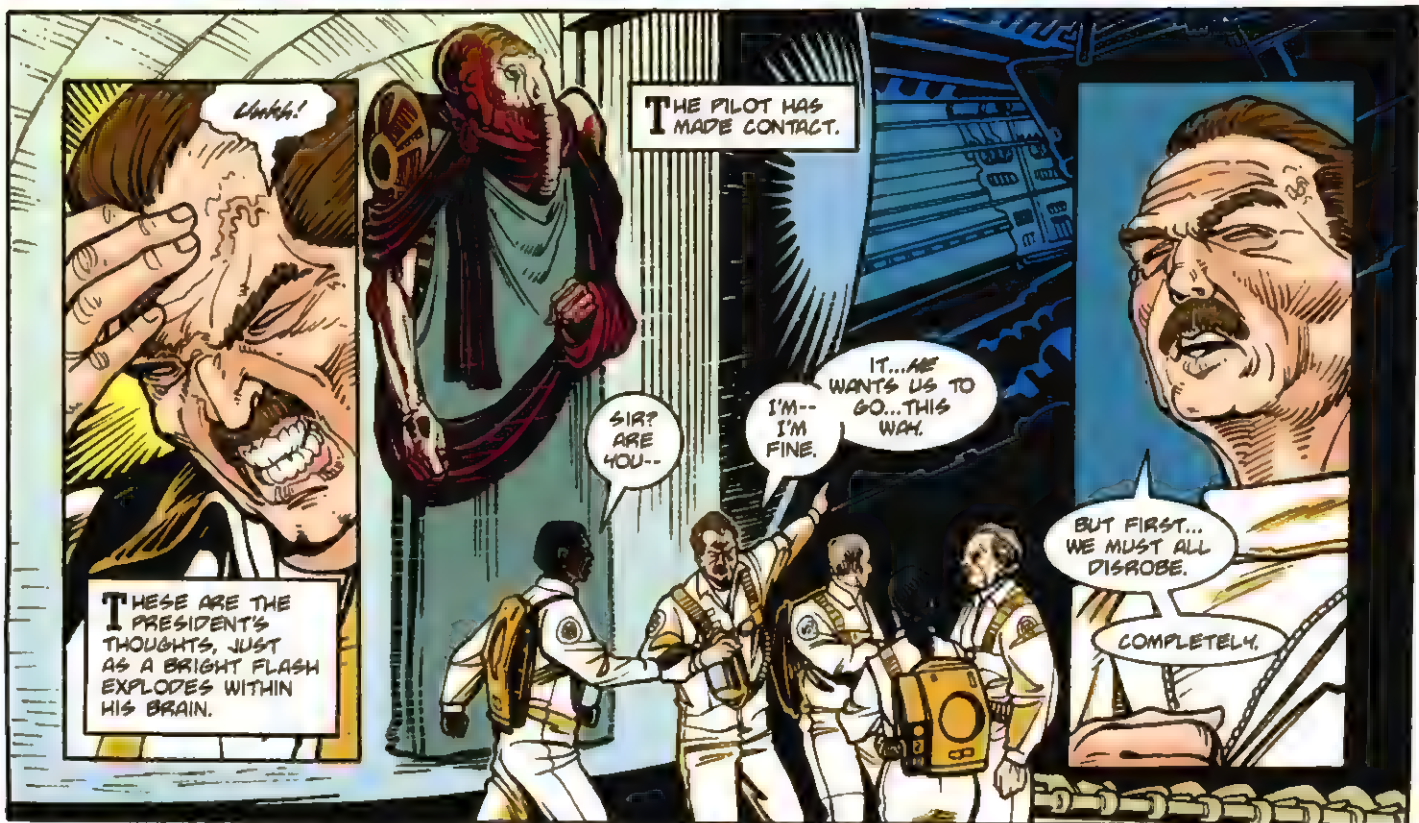




SURELY, THIS IS A
BRILLIANT CREATURE,
CAPABLE OF SINGLE
HANDEDLY ALTERING
THE CLIMATES OF THE
ENTIRE EARTH.

BUT THE EYES
CONVEY NO
INTELLECT AT
ALL. THEY ARE
VOID OF
EXPRESSION
AND FEELING.
COLD. EMPTY.

LIKE THE
EYES OF
A DEAD
ANIMAL.



Ungh!

THE PILOT HAS
MADE CONTACT.

SIR?
ARE
YOU--

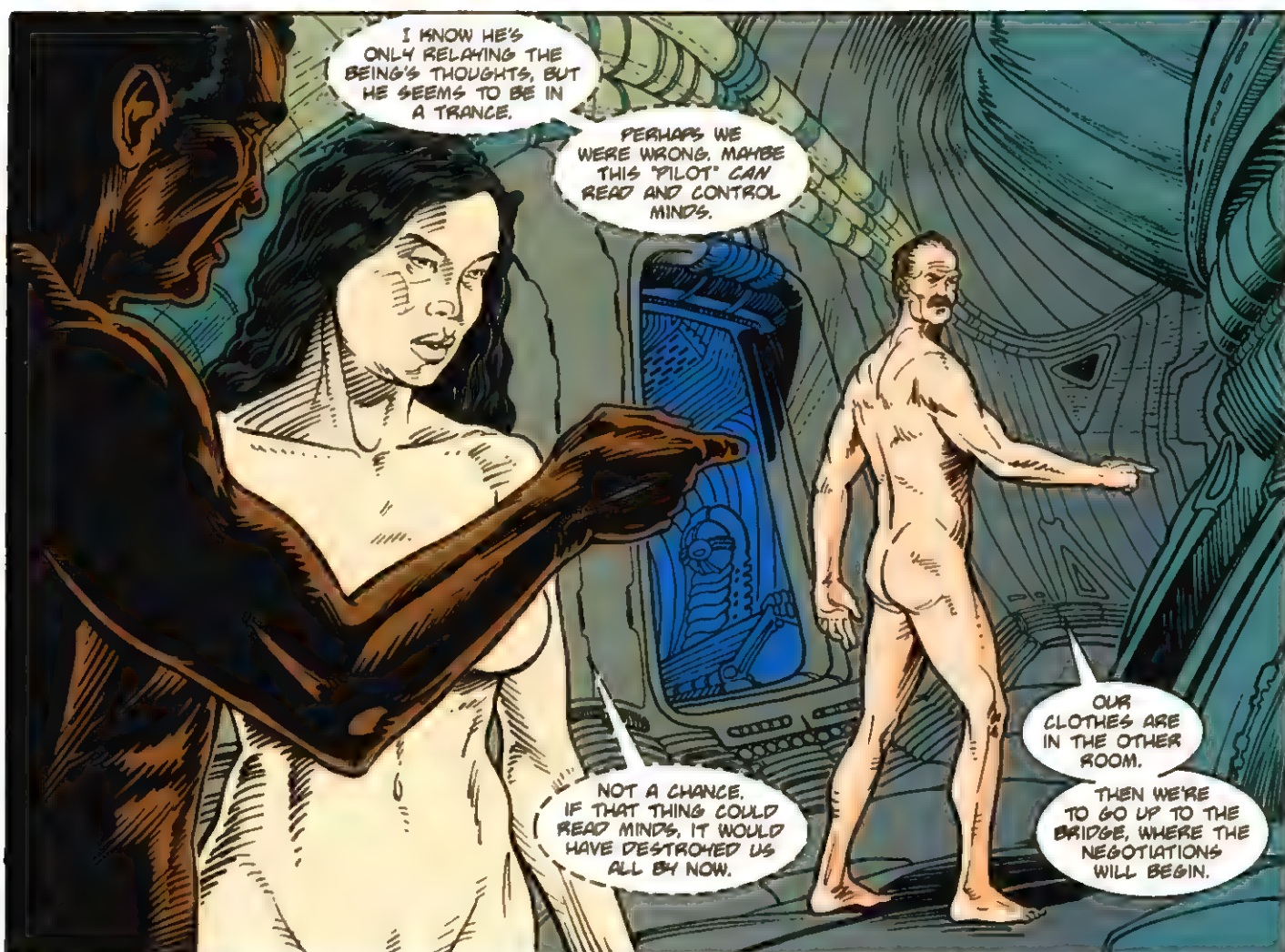
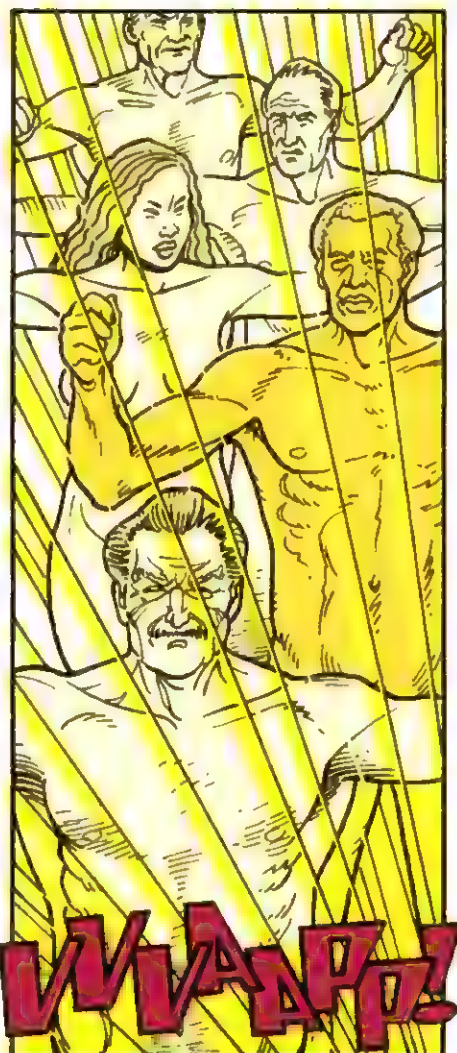
I'M--
I'M
FINE.

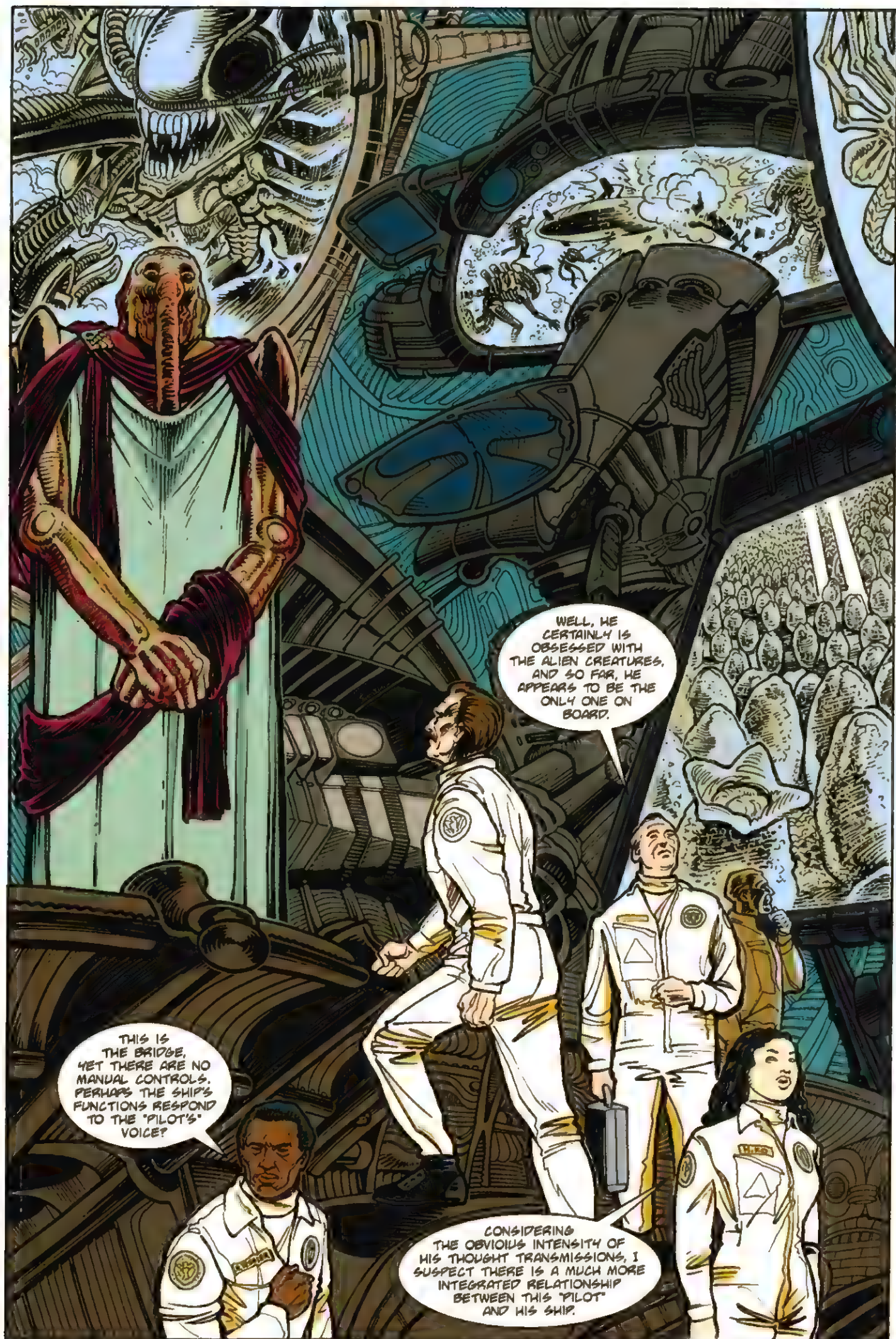
IT...~~HE~~
WANTS US TO
GO...THIS
WAY.

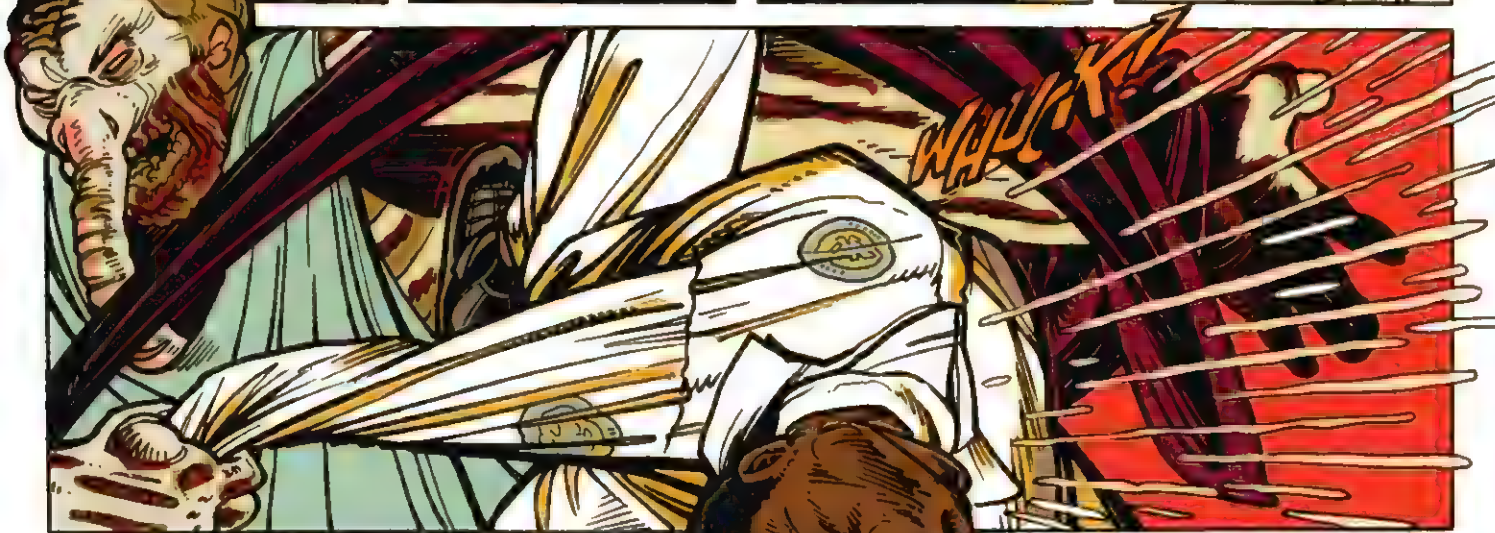
THESE ARE THE
PRESIDENT'S
THOUGHTS, JUST
AS A BRIGHT FLASH
EXPLODES WITHIN
HIS BRAIN.

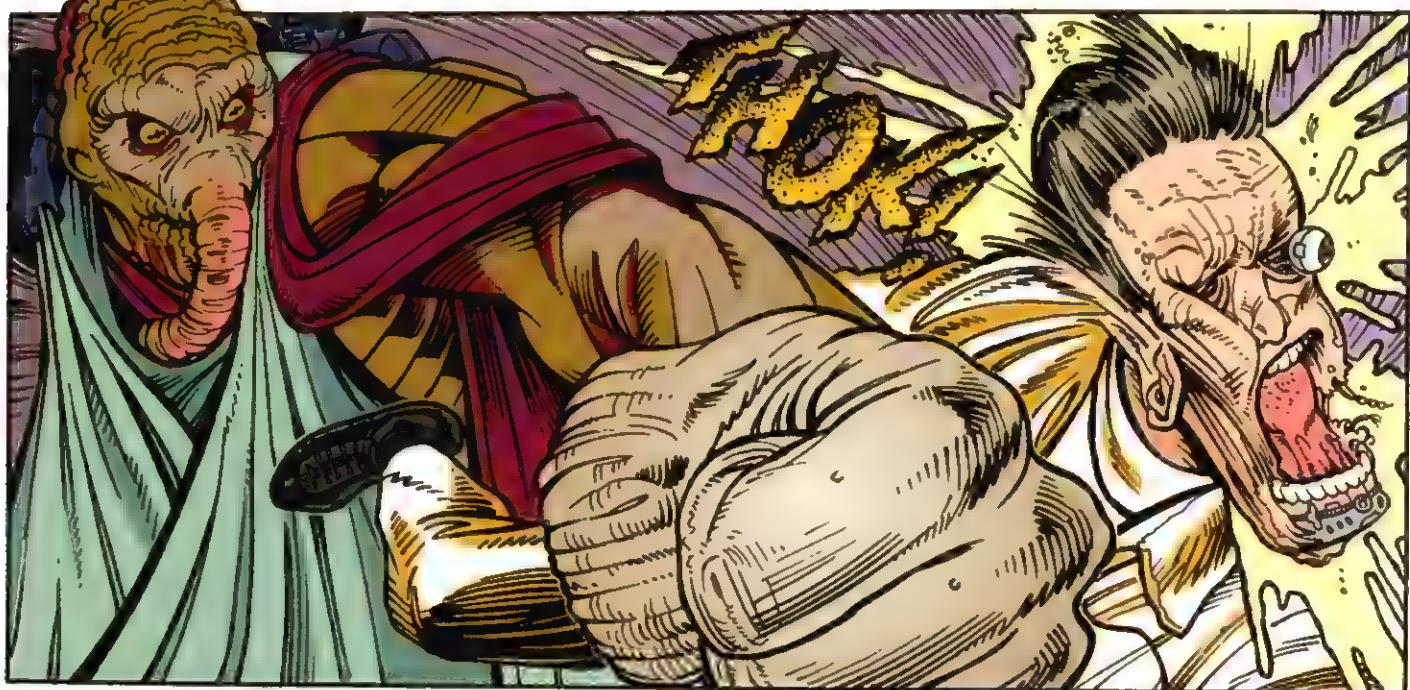
BUT FIRST...
WE MUST ALL
DISROBE.

COMPLETELY.







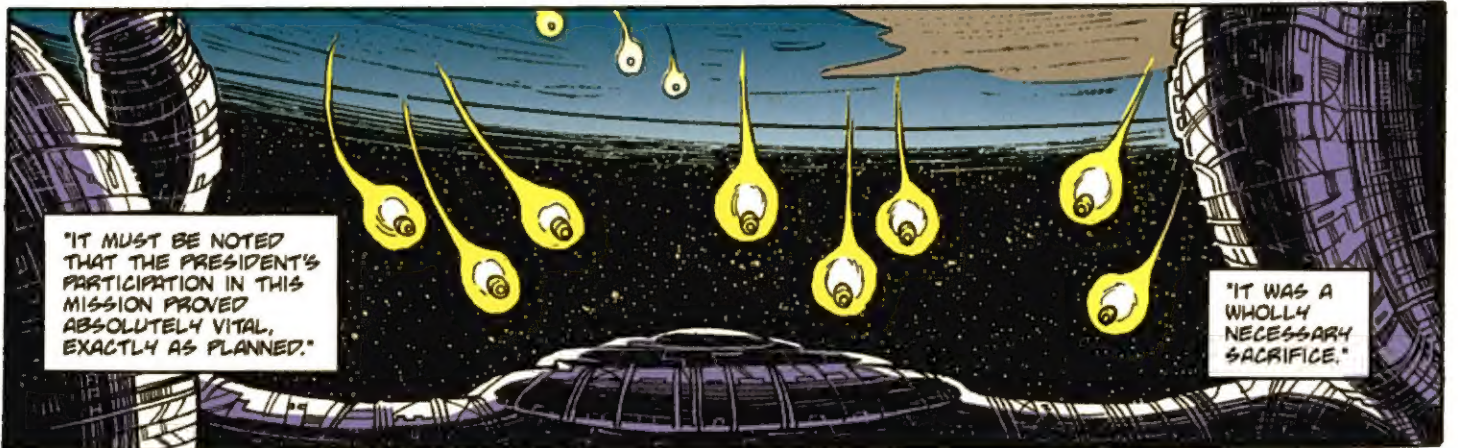
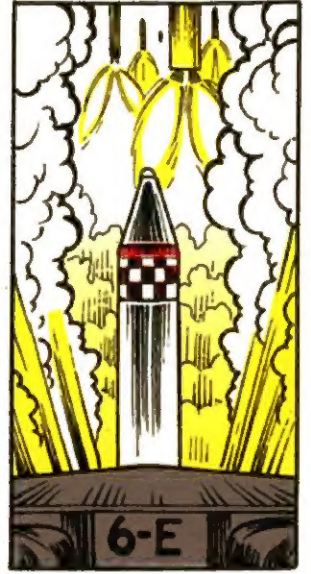
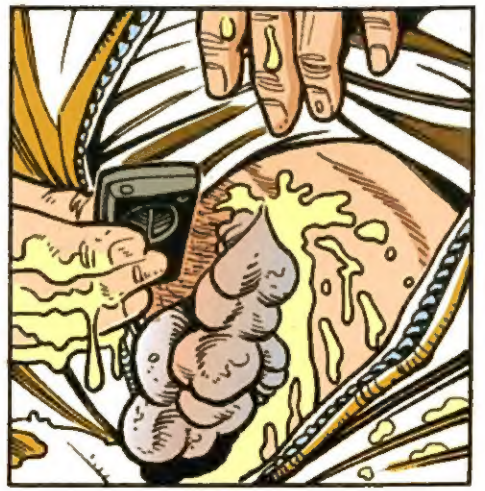






WHICH, IN
THIS CASE--





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